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ABSTRACT

A study was done at the University of Guelph (Ontario, Canada) examining the experiences, concerns and interests of college freshmen. Of 65 entering students who agreed to participate, 37 signed up for the study in September, 1988, with 24 women and 4 men completing all study requirements: completion of a daily diary; bimonthly unstructured interviews with a student services "buddy"; and completion of four standardized instruments concerned with attitudes, values, social development, dynamics of families of origin and perceived levels of stress. The data were subjected to thematic analysis aimed at discovering recurrent patterns in participants' reports. This yielded a total of 36 themes grouped into 3 domains: personal, interpersonal, and environmental. Overall, academic and social processes unfolded within specific environmental contexts on campus, with the most significant context being residence life where most participants spent the majority of their free time. What was striking about students' accounts of their daily experience was its ecological complexity, with the whole emerging out of interactions among various constituent domain elements. Participants were students, children, friends, lovers simultaneously, striving, as whole persons, to achieve a workable balance between the social and the academic, the personal and the impersonal, the affective and the objective. Included in the appendixes are the interview protocol and primer for the student diary. Also included is a list of over 300 references. (JB)

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STUDENT-ENVIRONMENT STUDY GROUP

FRESHMAN DAILY EXPERIENCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, RESEARCH AND THEORY.

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**FRESHMAN DAILY EXPERIENCE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY,
RESEARCH AND THEORY.**

by

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c January, 1990

Student Development Monograph Series, Volume 4

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past century, policy makers and researchers alike have been intensely concerned with understanding the undergraduate experience. This has and remains especially true with respect to freshman students who, each year, enter university in their millions and who are most likely to dropout prematurely. These efforts, however, remain incomplete; despite a voluminous literature, our knowledge of the freshman experience remains unsystematic and fragmented. It has also been distorted by an adultocentric perspective which has constrained researched efforts such that they have conformed with adult interests and concerns; freshman have only seldom been asked directly about their concerns and interests.

In an effort to remedy some of these limitations, the **Student Experience Study** was initiated at the University of Guelph on a pilot basis during the period September-December, 1988. Prior to that period, students attending summer orientation at the university were invited to participate. Of 65 students who agreed to do so, 37 signed up for the study in September, with 24 - 20 women and four men - completing all study requirements. Based on an ecological perspective, the latter included: completion of a daily diary, bi-monthly unstructured interviews with a student services "buddy", and completion of four standardized instruments concerned, respectively, with their attitudes and values, their social development, the dynamics of their families of origin, and their perceived level of stress. The diaries, based on a primer prepared expressly for this study, were intended to be comprehensive in character, touching on a wide range of experience and incorporating events and persons both on and off campus.

Together, interview transcripts and daily diaries totaled in excess of 5000 pages. These were subjected to thematic analysis aimed at discovering recurrent patterns in participants reports. This yielded a total of 36 themes grouped in three broad domains: personal, interpersonal, and environmental.

The personal domain touched on the psychological and the academic character of students experience. The former emphasized the stressful character of freshman daily experience, with most students confronted on arrival with some degree of culture shock, including feelings of isolation, disorientation, depression, and homesickness. Various related psychophysiological states were also reported, especially some

combination of fatigue, sleep disruption, symptoms of flu-like illness and, in some cases, weight loss.

While some combination of these various processes was virtually universal across subjects, their severity and duration varied considerably and, in turn, served as indicators of student adjustment. Thus, about one third of students adjusted quickly and easily, another 40% took longer to adjust and found the process somewhat more difficult, while about a third of students required to the end of the semester before their adjustment was complete, with their experience reported as especially painful.

In this context, adjustment was further related to subject self-esteem. In the majority of instances, on arrival women were more likely than their male counterparts to report low intellectual and social self-esteem. Subsequent shifts in esteem were associated with the process of adjustment. Thus, some students showed little change throughout the semester, others reported positive changes, while still others reported some deterioration.

One basis for these shifts related to participants experience of academic work and achievement. With respect to the latter, students universally reported being overwhelmed by the workload and, concomitantly, of being unable to keep up. With respect to the latter, 43% of students arrived on campus with a grade 13 average in the 'A' range. By the end of the first semester, only 13% had retained their 'A'. By the end of the second semester, that proportion had dropped to 9%. Overall, 67% of the participants showed a decline in grade averages of between one and two grade points. Indeed, their first semester average turned out to be a better predictor of second semester academic performance than their grade 13 averages.

Further inquiry indicated that academic performance was a complex phenomenon, related to a range of associated dimensions. One such dimension, workload, has already been noted, above. Other related dimensions included: the lock-step character of the semester system; the hidden curriculum formed out of faculty members covert assumptions and standards; classroom size, with small classes preferred; the feedback effects of good or poor academic performance; and, classroom dynamics, especially relations with peers and with faculty.

As suggested above, academic processes constituted only one basis for explaining student academic performance. The other basis was social, that is, the on-going interpersonal relationship between the students

and their friends, their romantic partners, and their parents (and other family members). Indeed, of the two, social processes appeared to predominate.

As for same-sex friends, they were central to students daily experience. However, friends were not all of a piece. Rather, several different categories of friends could reliably be differentiated. Old old friends were those left behind when the students came to university and most of these relationships were at high risk of dissolution. Old new friends were those who accompanied subjects to university from high school and they were doubled-edged in character, an important source of support but also a drawback in making new friends. Finally, roommates were those about whom students had the highest expectations which were seldom realized, with about one third of women in 'best friend' relationship, two-third in 'intimate acquaintance' relationships, while all the men were in 'pseudointimate' relationships. Irrespective of the category of friend, all friends were simultaneously sources of support and demand, such that time spent forming and maintaining friendship relationships usually meant time ~~not~~ spent doing academic work.

Much the same was true of romantic others, in this case, boyfriends since none of the men were romantically involved on arrival. Of the women, two thirds were so involved on arrival. Again, however, all romantic relationships were not all of a piece. Rather, two categories could reliably be distinguished: those that were stable on arrival and those that were unstable. Relationships among stable romantic partners were characterized by voluminous communication covering a wide range of topics, frequent contact (both by telephone and in person), and mutual feelings of closeness and intimacy. Relationships among unstable romantic partners were characterized by limited communication, infrequent contact, and mutual or individual feelings of isolation and separation. Among the latter alone, 75% broke up temporarily or permanently during the semester. Finally, irrespective of relationship category, relationships between participants and their romantic others were invariably perceived as extremely important, and thus fully warranted the varying amounts of time and energy devoted to them. Consequently, it is hardly surprising to note that when faced with a choice between involvement with their romantic other and academic work, the former was nearly always given preference.

Finally, parents (and other family members), typically given rather short shrift within the higher

education literature, were highly salient figures for most participants. This said, the affective charge associated with parents varied considerably as a function of family type. Four family types emerged as important. Students from fragile independent families were typically highly involved with their parents and typically quite dependent upon them. Those from affectionate independent families had a flexible and relatively autonomous relationship with them. Those from hostile independent families had a rigid, rather distant relationship with their parents, while those from pervasive independent families cared little for or about their parents and led lives totally separate from them. In turn, students from these family types were differentially likely to report stability or change in their relationship with their parents over the course of the semester, sometimes in a positive direction, sometimes in a negative one. Further, their relationship with their parents, as with their friends and their romantic others, were hardly independent of either their psychological state as well as their academic achievement. Rather, consistent evidence emerged of significant cross-linkages between them.

Finally, both academic and social processes unfolded within specific environmental contexts on campus. By far the most significant concerned residence life where most participants spent the majority of their free time. In turn, this encompassed a range of activities, some positive, others negative, including activities related to student orientation; the use (and abuse of alcohol), especially by men; control over private space, especially the degree to which the residence environment was experienced as socially intrusive; the importance among women only of recreating 'home' within their residence room; and, the mixed assessment of residence assistants. Additional environmental observations related to the physical beauty of the Guelph campus; security fears among the women; the character and quality of the food offered in on-campus cafeterias; and, the mixed relationship between students and university service staff.

Seen in broad overview, these data yielded ten metathemes that were, in turn, the basis for a detailed discussion of 40 policy, research and theoretical implications.

In general, what was striking about students' accounts of their daily experience was its ecological complexity, with the whole emerging out of the interaction among its constituent domain elements. In consequence, it is both misleading and inaccurate to speak about these participants as 'students', 'children',

'friends', and the like, for they were singularly none of these things; rather, they were **all** of them simultaneously, striving, as whole persons, to achieve a workable balance between the social and the academic, the personal and the impersonal, the affective and the objective.

This said, students' experience in each domain did **not** contribute to this **whole** in equal measure, for participants' accounts made clear that, at its most meaningful, university life for them was constituted out of their daily interaction with those others significant to them: their parents, their friends (old and new), and their lovers. On balance, during their first semester at university, these relations formed the foreground of their experience, with academic concerns, however important, relegated to the background.

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INTRODUCTION

Each year across North America, millions of young men and women leave high school to enter the larger world beyond. Of these, a significant minority - on the order of three to four million - will enter university as freshman students (Anisef, 1982, 1986; Boyer, 1987; Secretary of State, 1988). For these freshmen themselves, their first year at university will typically be a consequential and difficult one, involving a major life transition coupled with significant academic, social and personal challenges (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Komarovsky, 1976, 1985).¹ Consequences will also accrue to their significant others - including family members, friends, and romantic others - for some relationships will continue unchanged, others will be maintained but change form, while still others will fade into history (Bumstead, 1975; Davis, 1977-78; Pruchno et al., 1984; Weidman, 1988). Finally, the university too will feel the effects of this decision, for it is during the freshman year, and especially the first term or semester, that most students decide to drop-out (Boyer, 1987; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Noel, 1976; Noel et al., 1985; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1977).

The size of the population, its annual character, and the consequences of the transition for all concerned: all support the expectation that the available knowledge base regarding freshman life should be voluminous, detailed and comprehensive. Below, in selectively reviewing the three areas of concern in which relevant data accrue, I will argue that the knowledge we have about freshman students, especially as regards their *lived experience*, is, in fact, both limited and unsystematic.

Substantive Concerns

For more than a century, research interest in undergraduate life in general and freshman experience in particular has been intense (eg., Horowitz, 1987; Lee, 1970). By 1932, for example, Cowley listed more

¹ Similar problems also affect the freshman experience of returning older students (see Ross, 1988).

than 2,000 such studies while more recent reviews (eg., Boyer, 1987; Chickering et al., 1981; Davis, 1977; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Pace, 1979; Smart, 1985) suggest that, if anything, this interest has accelerated.

As regards the substantive content of this body of work, it will be useful to distinguish between five categories. The first group of studies I have called **freshman incidental**. This easily contains the largest number of studies while contributing least to our understanding of freshman experience. The implied paradox is explained by the category title, that is, studies in this category rely exclusively on the use of freshman as research subjects while the focus of the research is invariably elsewhere. Thus, the fact that the subjects are freshman is simply incidental to the focus of inquiry.

The point is illustrated by two recent volumes in the *Student Development* monograph series (Benjamin 1988a, 1988b). Concerned, respectively, with family and residence life, they collectively encompass close to a thousand references, with the clear majority of the studies cited reliant on freshmen as subjects. In most cases, the subjects' freshman status was irrelevant; thus we learn much about the families of freshmen (eg., Westley & Epstein, 1969) or the social environment of the freshman residence hall (eg., Moos, 1978), but nothing whatever either of how these relate to each other or the part either plays in the larger freshman experience.

The next group of studies has been labeled **high-level survey**, and encompasses a small but growing number of works. Examples include Gardner's (1987) longitudinal study of university-bound high school students, Astin's (1965, 1977, 1978, 1985) annual survey of college freshmen,² and the Carnegie Foundation's (1976, 1984, 1985) surveys of college and high school students (see also Baird, 1987; Chickering, 1974; Kramer, 1980; Pascarella, 1984, 1985; Strommen, 1988).

On one level, these studies are invaluable, supplying a wealth of information about freshman attitudes, values and expectations. On another level, however, they remain problematic on several grounds: (1) data are aggregated and as such only refer to statistical constructions, rather than specific, living students;

² A survey of more than 5000 Canadian undergraduates at four universities has recently (1988) been completed using (with permission) a slightly modified version of Astin's instrument. For more information, contact the Student-Environment Study Group, University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada.

(2) only self-report data are gathered and thus correspond to an unknown extent with the actual behavior of the students in question; (3) responses are gathered *before* subjects have any experience of university life, and so are likely to change in unknown ways (cf. Philips, 1976); (4) dimensions explored are those which lend themselves to Likert-type constructions, such that those aspects of freshman experience which are not so readily quantifiable tend to escape inquiry (see McCracken, 1988); and (5) perhaps most important (see below, Theoretical Concerns), these data have little or no context or "ecological validity" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), that is, apart from demographic indicators, no data are collected which would suggest, for example, the character of their relationship with a range of significant others.

On these grounds, research studies within this category can, at best, only provide an abstracted, high-level portrait of freshman experience. Such a portrait is useful but only goes so far in its explication of freshman experience.

The third group of studies I have called *needs assessment*. This entails a growing number of studies concerned primarily with the perceived needs and problems of freshman students (Benedict et al., 1977; Berdie & Stein, 1966; Butler, 1977; Celio & Sedlacek, 1976; Cutrona, 1982; Fullerton & Potkay, 1973; Galassi & Galassi, 1973; Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987; Levin & Franklin, 1984; Moore et al., 1981; Palladino & Tryon, 1978; Rees, 1984; Sagarin et al., 1980; Sundberg, 1988). Also relevant here are two sets of related studies, the first concerned with the problems of separation-individuation among freshmen who have left home for the very first time (Johnson, 1980; Moore & Hotch, 1981; Philip, 1987; Powell, 1987), the second concerned with the discrepancy between the high expectations of entering freshmen and the reality of university life (also known as the "freshman myth") (Baker et al., 1985; Berdie, 1966, 1968; Herr, 1971; King & Walsh, 1972; Pervin, 1966; Stern, 1970). These studies are especially important, for they begin to give a specific face to freshman students. At the same time, they remain quite limited in what they can tell us about these students. For example, in addition to problems of ecological validity, these studies focus on a single dimension of freshman experience; on the equally important question of how this dimension is related to or interacts with a range of other, equally important dimensions - for example, peer relations or academic performance - they remain necessarily mute.

The next group of studies I have called **comprehensive studies**. This encompasses a mere handful of studies which endeavor to construct a more complex portrait of freshman students. As the category label implies, these are studies which seek to create a comprehensive (Bushnell, 1962; Freeman, 1956; Jencks & Riesman, 1962; Raushenbush & Murphy, 1960; Sanford, 1956, 1962) or near comprehensive (Becker et al., 1961, 1968; Gusfield & Reisman, 1968; Komarovsky, 1976, 1985; Newcomb, 1943, 1952; Newcomb et al., 1967; Raushenbush, 1964; Reisman & Jencks, 1962; Whiteley, 1982) portrait of the freshman experience, typically by means of intensive case studies of specific universities, including Harvard, Bennington, Sarah Lawrence and Vassar. This is the first category of studies which does **not** suffer problems of ecological validity. This advantage notwithstanding, these studies remain unsystematic in their coverage across dimensions: residence life, peers relations, study habits, classroom culture, academic achievement, and so on, each is a topic typically covered by one study but by none of the others. Moreover, with few exceptions, the focus of these studies is restricted to events and persons on campus; only Komarovsky (1976, 1985) and Moffat (1989) appear to recognize that students have parents and that the parent-child relationship is a consequential one throughout the college years.

Finally, the fifth group of studies I have labeled **personal accounts**. This category too consists of only a handful of studies that provide either autobiographical (Elkins, 1985; Harvey, 1982; Lever & Schwartz, 1971; Schwartz & Lever, 1976; Turow, 1977) or interview-based (Davis, 1977; Lamont, 1979) accounts of the freshman experience.³ While insightful in many respects, and richly detailed, these studies too remain unsystematic as a function of the author(s) biases, recording proclivities, and perceived audiences.

In sum, then, the research literature regarding the freshman experience, while certainly voluminous and strikingly diverse, remains substantively narrow and unsystematic, ultimately failing to provide a truly comprehensive picture of the lived experience of freshman students.

³ In this context, a series of non-scientific, "how to" books have regularly been produced in an effort to prepare in-coming freshman students for the trials and tribulations of their first year at university (eg., Field et al., 1987; Kingsbury, 1974; Meiland, 1981; Walter & Siebert, 1987). Related works have also been addressed to parents (eg., Coburn & Treeger, 1988; Edelstein et al., 1989), student service personnel (eg., Upcraft & Gardner, 1989) and scholars (eg., Axelrod & Reid, 1989).

Methodological Concerns

If, as noted above, the research literature concerning the freshman experience is substantively diverse, the same **cannot** be said about the methods employed in the studies in question. Overwhelmingly, the studies cited above rely on cross-sectional, "static" (Baxter & Wilmot, 1986) designs, primarily self-report surveys and/or standardized instruments. Such data are problematic in several respects: they are incompatible with a concern with student development or change through time; they necessarily lack ecological validity insofar as they tend to focus on one dimension at a time while ignoring other dimensions that may be contextually significant (Willems, 1969); they fail to take account of findings which suggest that subjects' ability to reconstruct their experience after the fact is poor (Yarmey, 1979); they ignore findings which indicate that subjects are unable to provide reliable assessments of either their personality or their experience (Fiske, 1971; Mischel, 1968); and, they fail to attend to findings which suggest that a significant discrepancy between what subjects say and what they do is virtually commonplace (Deutscher, 1973). Taken together, these problems associated with self-report data suggest that, in the words of Larson and Csikszentmihalyi (1983), "One-time assessments appear to reflect response sets and cultural stereotypes as much as they do anything else."

This said, what other methods might be employed to more completely and more reliably capture freshman experience? One alternative approach involves the use of student **diaries** or journals.⁴ While the use of diaries, especially time diaries, has a long history (eg., Bevans, 1913), their use with student subjects has been both relatively limited and quite recent (Desmond & Glenwick, 1987; Duck & Miell, 1986; Hogan & Hendrickson, 1984; McCarthy, 1986; Mellon, 1986; Nezlek et al., 1983; Prather, 1970; Rabinowitz, 1987; Reis, 1986; Reis et al., 1980; Skipper et al., 1989; Wheeler & Nezlek, 1977; Wheeler et al., 1983; Whiteley, 1982).⁵

⁴ A third approach is that of participant observation (eg., Becker et al., 1968). For a more general discussion of its use in education, see Bogdan and Biklen (1982) and Goetz and LeCompte (1984).

⁵ Diaries have been used with a range of subjects other than students (see Atkinson, 1985; Norris, 1987; Zimmerman & Wieder, 1977). Similarly, various social scientists have provided personal accounts of their experience 'in the field' (see Lofland & Lofland, 1984: 44).

On the one hand, such efforts remain tentative. Researchers have seldom provided any instruction to subjects concerning how diaries are to be maintained nor what range of subjects should constitute their focus of attention (cf. Skipper et al., 1989). Similarly, these studies have typically sought data concerning a very restricted range of variables. On the other hand, this technology holds much promise in the explication of freshman experience, offering such advantages as ecological validity, concreteness, detail, affective immediacy, continuity through time, and freedom from recall bias. Moreover, without exception, these studies have, first, emphasized the variability of student behavior across a range of substantive domains; and, second, by concentrating on what students actually do rather than what they say they do, such efforts have undercut both received wisdom and established theory (see Duck & Miell, 1986).

In sum, then, existing research studies concerning freshman experience have taken the easy route to data collection, relying primarily on descriptions of what students say they do at particular points in time and across a narrow band of dimensions. Given that there are good grounds for thinking such descriptions methodologically suspect, this in turn casts doubt on the substantive data thus acquired. It appears that what we think we know about the freshman experience is doubly limited, both in substantive range and in methodological validity.

Theoretical Concerns

The final area of concern relevant to the freshman experience is that of theory, specifically **student development theory (SDT)**. In its present form, this encompasses several families of theory, including cognitive (King et al., 1984; Loevinger, 1966, 1976; Perry, 1970, 1981), psychosocial (Chickering, 1974), maturational (D. Heath, 1977; Levinson et al., 1978), typological (Cross, 1976; R. Heath, 1973) and environmental or ecological (Huebner, 1984; Moos, 1974, 1979; see Banning & McKinley, 1980; Walsh, 1973, 1978) variants. Their collective importance to North American higher education can hardly be overemphasized. Whereas decision and policy-making was traditionally based on received wisdom and personal experience (Ender et

al., 1984), it has come to rely increasingly on SDT (Drum, 1980; Rodgers, 1980; Widick et al., 1981), a fact that has led Bloland (1986) to dub it the "new orthodoxy".

As a set of organizing principles, the relevance of SDT to freshman students is its proponents' traditional concern with "the whole student" (Widick et al., 1981). Logically, such a perspective should translate into a conceptual interest in the interaction among a broad range of factors, a view which would make it especially amenable to the explication of freshman experience. Indeed, with some reservations (see below), such is the case among theorists who belong to the ecological family of theories.

As for those in the remaining families, however, I have elsewhere (Benjamin, 1986) argued that, despite variations in detail, their proponents share a commitment to four fundamental assumptions, namely, that: (1) development occurs within the individual student; (2) development is fundamentally progressive and unidirectional, even stage-like; (3) psychological rather than either social or environmental contexts are central to understanding development; conceptually, then, what students think and feel is more important than what they do; and (4) gender differences, insofar as they exist, are irrelevant for theoretical purposes, with the experience of males representative of the experience of students of both sexes.

For their proponents, these features of SDT represent its strengths and help account for its widespread popularity. Indeed, existing critiques are both few in number and only mildly incremental in substance (Cameron, 1985; Kegan, 1982; Rodgers, 1980). In contrast, I have argued (Benjamin, 1986) that these assumptions are untenable in the face of data which supports an alternate set of assumptions, namely, that development is derived through interpersonal interaction, is highly variable (as regards both course and direction), involves context-specific processes, is best understood in behavioral terms (what students *do* rather than what they *say*), and, at least with regard to specific factors, involves processes which diverge across gender. These assumptions are not only consistent with *some* of the models within the ecological family of theories but, ironically, some of the most recent work in psychology (eg., Bell, 1981; Davidson et al., 1980; Gilmour & Duck, 1986; Kelley et al., 1983; Matheny et al., 1986; Peplau & Gordon, 1985; Pruchno et al., 1984) emphasizing reciprocity, interdependence, process and emergence.

On the basis of the systemic assumptions noted above, together with a review of the relevant empirical literature, I have advanced an ecological model of student development (Benjamin, 1986). This involves a large number of factors (and their interactions), organized in three domains: family dynamics, organizational dynamics, and student-university interaction. This model can be distinguished from others belonging to the ecological family of models in three ways: first, the number and range of factors (existing models are much more restricted on both counts); second, the consistent emphasis on specific social processes as ultimately playing a determinant role in student development (existing models explore a restricted range of such processes and accord them a non-determinant status)(cf. Schlossberg, 1981); and, third, the generic character of this model means that it can be employed to explore and describe the full range of freshman experience (existing models are conceptually designed with a larger time frame in mind, with freshmen either automatically assumed or empirically shown to operate at the "lower" end of whatever developmental sequence is posited).

This said, it must immediately be noted that no data yet exists on the basis of which a definitive choice might be made between my ecological model, existing ecological models or any of the other models which currently constitute SDT. In this sense, then, our knowledge base concerning freshman students is again limited, unable to account systematically for the experience of freshmen as "whole" students.

This selective review of the freshman literature has accomplished two things. First, it has elaborated on my initial claim that the existing knowledge base regarding freshman experience is restricted. Substantively, the literature covers a narrow range of topics, and often at a very high level of abstraction. Even more significant, these studies are typically unidimensional in character, focusing on one variable or cluster of variables at a time while eschewing recognition of the cross-linkages between dimensions. While there are studies offering a fuller account of freshman experience, these are few in number, most rather dated, and with a stereotypical and selective focus on on-campus events and persons. To make matters worse, most studies have relied on self-report surveys and/or standardized instruments both of which are poorly suited to the explication of complex life processes. Finally, most of the models which currently constitute

SDT show little interest in freshman per se. Accordingly, they have stereotypically conceptualized freshman students as either "immature" or some related analog, with little regard for variation among freshmen and even less concern for the complexity of the lived experience of freshman students.

This said, the second thing accomplished by the above review is to underline the need for future research concerning the freshman experience have the following characteristics: multidimensional, longitudinal, behavioral, detailed and using data collection methods consistent with ecological validity. In the balance of this monograph, the results of a **pilot study**, entitled the **Student Experience Study**, are presented which meets all of these requirements.

The study in question was guided by the following objectives:

1. To assemble a small group of in-coming freshman students attending the University of Guelph.
2. To follow the **daily** experience of these students throughout the first semester (September-December, 1988).
3. To collect **both** qualitative and quantitative data throughout the period in question.
4. To analyze the corpus of data thus obtained in order to construct a **comprehensive** portrait of the lived experience of freshman subjects.
5. To explore the findings with regard to their implications for policy, research methodology or student development theory.

In what follows, the study's methodology is addressed first. Next, the qualitative findings will be presented organized on the basis of the thematic analysis of student subject daily diaries; the quantitative findings will be embedded in the text.⁶ Throughout, wherever appropriate, the relevant findings in the freshman research literature will be reviewed. Finally, the implications of these data for policy and operations, research methods, and student development theory will be explored.

⁶ The quantitative findings are reported in descriptive form only. Extensive efforts at crosstabulation analysis, using chi square, failed as a function of small sample size ($n=24$) and a highly kurtotic frequency distribution. The invariable results were multiple null cells or cells with n 's less than 5, thus invalidating the chi.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Time Frame. Conducted by the Student-Environment Study Group, data collection was on-going during the period September 3 (three days prior to registration) to December 15 (end of the first semester), 1988.

Sampling. Sampling relied on volunteers among students attending the START Program at the University of Guelph. This is a two-day orientation program held each Summer for grade 13 graduates who have been accepted as freshman by the University. Attendance is voluntary and involves a small fee. To each of three groups of students who attended, a presentation entitled "Changing Relationships" was given. At its conclusion, students were invited to participate in the *Student Experience Study*.⁷ Of the 125 students who attended this series of lectures, 62 (50%) volunteered. Of these, 37 (60%) actually contributed some data, with 24 (drop-out rate: 35%) continuing as active participants throughout the data collection period: 20 women and four men.

To formalize their involvement in this study, and adhere to conventional standards of **informed consent**, all subjects read and signed a consent form which set out precisely what their involvement would entail, who would have access to data pertaining to them, and what they could expect in terms of feedback and disclosure (see Appendix 1).

Instrumentation. Quantitative data were collected by means of four standardized instruments. These included: (1) the Incoming Student Information Form, (with permission) a slightly modified version of the main survey instrument used in Astin's (1977) CIRP program in the United States; (2) the Student Developmental Task Inventory [SDTI-2] (Winston et al., 1979), a measure of psychosocial development based on the work of Chickering (1969); (3) the Symptom Checklist [SCL-90R] (Derogatis, 1982), a measure of stress and psychophysiological functioning; and (4) the FACES III (Olson, 1986), a measure of family dynam-

⁷ Student participation was rationalized on several grounds: as an aid to future students; as information helpful to administration and faculty members; as a means of self-development; as a way to create a permanent record of this major life transition; and, as a basis for an on-going relationship with a staff "buddy" who would provide both information and support.

ics. All measures have been widely used and all are reliable and valid. With the exception of the SCL-90R, all instruments were completed once only, soon after subject's arrival on campus; the SCL-90R was completed three times, on arrival, at about six weeks, and again at about 12 weeks.

Additional quantitative data were acquired by access to the Student-Environment Study Group's **Tracking System**, an interactive computer program which compiles registration and other data on all undergraduate students at the University. For purposes of this study, data were collected with respect to four variables: high school leaving grade average; first and second semester grade average; academic program; and, where appropriate, residence building.

Qualitative Data. Qualitative data consisted of **unstructured interviews** and **daily diaries**. With regard to the former, all subjects were interviewed a total of **six** times (see Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Entry and termination interviews were comparatively lengthy (60-90 minutes). These interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed, with the ratio of interview time (in hours) to transcription time (in hours) approximately 1:3.5; accumulated interview pages totaled about 2500. Further, the protocols for these interviews (see Appendix 2) employed a series of probe questions which, based on a review of the freshman literature, focused on **six** topic areas (in no particular order of importance): (1) their personal identity and how this may have changed; (2) their expectations regarding their first semester at the University and the extent, in retrospect, to which they matched their actual experience; (3) their relationship with their parents and siblings and how this may have changed; (4) their relationship with same and opposite-sex friends "back home" and how this may have changed; (5) their relationship with same and opposite-sex friends at the University - especially their roommate (where applicable) - and how this may have changed; and (6) their relationship with their boy- or girlfriend (where applicable) and how this may have changed. Probe questions were used as required by interviewers (either student service or residence life staff members) assigned to each subject as a "buddy" and trained specifically for this study.

Intervening interviews were considerably shorter (30 minutes) and were spaced at two-week intervals. These contacts were included as much to provide support for subjects as to collect any new information

about their progress; they were recorded by means of jotted notes (see Lofland, 1978) and then fleshed out later.

Turning to the diaries, these were maintained on a **daily** basis throughout the first **eight weeks** at the University. While subjects had considerable flexibility in formatting their diary entries, all subjects were nevertheless provided with a 15-page written manual prepared specifically for this study (see Appendix 3). This set out minimal topic areas and provided practical advice as to appropriate recording procedures. In addition, subjects were provided with a small notebook which, it was suggested, be used to record jotted notes of events as they transpired during each day, these notes to be used to flesh out complete diary entries at the end of each day or every second day. Completed diary entries, with pages consecutively numbered, were handed in roughly every 10 days at which time two photocopies were made - a working copy and an archival copy - and the original returned to the subject. The completed diaries averaged 69 pages in length (range: 23-132 pages), with subjects who completed all requirements of this study collectively yielding a total of about 2500 diary pages.

Throughout, subjects were identified only by a randomly selected **control number** keyed to their student ID. So identified, diary entries were read by **only** two individuals. The project director read the entries of all subjects. However, as previously noted, all subjects were also paired with a staff "buddy" each of whom was responsible for 1-4 subjects. Since diary entries were used to prepare for the intervening interviews (see Zimmerman & Wieder, 1977), the "buddies" also read the diaries of those subjects for whom they were responsible.

For their participation in this study, subjects were provided with three "meals cards" - one on entry, one at six weeks and one at 12 weeks - with a total value per subject of about \$21.

Following Miles and Huberman (1984), after completion of this monograph, feedback to subjects will include: (1) the results of their standardized measures together with material relevant to the appropriate interpretation of these data; and (2) a written summary of the study's findings.

A final feature of dairy entries concerned a rudimentary effort at quantification. In this context, an obvious possibility would have been formal **content analysis**. Such a procedure, however, would have violated

the thematic integrity of the diaries **taken as a whole**. It would also have been inconsistent with the qualitative character of this study whose purpose was to enter the subject's world in order to understand how they think and feel; their representative was simply not at issue (see McCracken, 1988).

Such objections notwithstanding, there is no absolute injunction against combining qualitative and quantitative data; indeed, there are advantages to such **triangulation** (see Lofland, 1978). Accordingly, there were a range of issues embedded in the diaries that, upon careful scrutiny, appeared amenable to quantification. These 19 **variables** are listed below together with their operational definitions:

Variable 1 Adjustment: subjects who, by the end of September, reported establishment of stable behavioral routines, feelings of satisfaction with their present situation and little sense of homesickness were rated **fast adjusters**; those who reported continuing difficulty with any or all of these items past September, were rated **slow adjusters**.

Variable 2 Illness: the reported frequency of physical illness, with or without medical attention.

Variable 3 Fatigue: explicit reports of physical tiredness, sleeplessness, and episodes of sleep during the day. Subjects were rated in dichotomous (yes, no) terms.

Variable 4 Diet Difficulties: explicit reports of meals missed, of poor food and of hunger. Subjects were rated in dichotomous (yes, no) terms.

Variable 5 Weight Loss: explicit reports of weight loss, rated in dichotomous (yes, no) terms.

Variable 6 Social Confidence: subjects who indicated the desire to be around other people, felt comfortable in doing so, and who readily made new friends were rated **high** in social confidence; those who reported shyness or loneliness, who indicated discomfort being around strangers, and who experienced some difficulty in making new friends were rated **low** in social confidence.

Variable 7 Academic Confidence: subjects who reported feeling comfortable in dealing with information they had not dealt with before, who expected to do well academically, and who felt that their study skills were at least adequate to any academic challenge were rated **high** academically; those for whom none of these things were true were rated **low** academically.

Variable 8 Workload Difficulties: explicit reports of problems keeping up with the workload, falling behind and of having to do additional work to catch up, rated in dichotomous (yes, no) terms.

Variable 9 Old Friends: explicit reports of continuous or episodic interaction with high school peers also attending the University of Guelph, rated in dichotomous (yes, no) terms.

Variable 10 START Friends: explicit reports of continuous or episodic interaction with peers first encountered during the START program, rated in dichotomous (yes, no) terms.

Variable 11 Roommate: subjects who, in interaction with their roommate, reported the disclosure of personal information, indicated feeling close to them and expressing concern for their welfare were rated as having a **close** relationship; those for whom none of these things were true, and who

also indicated feeling neutral or hostile towards their roommate were rated as having a **distant** relationship.

Variable 12 Boyfriend/Girlfriend: explicit reports of an on-going, romantic relationship with a member of the opposite sex, rating in dichotomous (yes, no) terms.

Variable 13 Boyfriend Relationship: those who, in interaction with their boyfriend (or girlfriend), reported the disclosure of personal information, who indicated feeling close to them, who indicated no or limited, low-intensity conflict and who expected this relationship to continue in the foreseeable future were rated as having a **stable** relationship; those for whom none of these things were true, and who indicated uncertainty regarding the future continuity of this relationship, were rated as having an **unstable** relationship.

Variable 14 Boyfriend Breakup: explicit reports that an on-going romantic relationship between a subject and a member of the opposite sex had been permanently discontinued, rated in dichotomous (yes, no) terms.

Variable 15 Parental Relationship: subjects who, in interaction with one or both parents, reported the disclosure of both personal and university-related information, who indicated feeling close to them, who reported no or limited, low-intensity conflict and who visited with some regularity were rated as having a **close** relationship; those for whom none of these things were true were rated as having a **distant** relationship.

Variable 16 Homesickness: those who reported daily and uncontrollable rumination about their parents and their home, who indicated fantasies about some aspect of their home, who felt out of place at the University, and who indicated daily episodes of sadness or depression were rated as **high** on this variable; those who experienced any or all of these things but with less frequency and less intensity were rated as **moderate**; and, those who experienced none of these things or some or all of them but for only a short period of time (ie., under two weeks) following their arrival at the University were rated **low**.

Variable 17 Extracurricular Activities: number of activities (eg. clubs, organizations, groups, sports) in which subjects engaged that were unrelated to their academic work at the University.

Variable 18 Floor Intrusion: explicit reports of difficulty in maintaining control of their residence room, especially as regards the entry of persons other than their roommate. This variable was rated in dichotomous (yes, no) terms.

Variable 19 Security: explicit reports that subjects feared for their safety at night and/or took explicit precautions against the possibility of sexual assault, rated in dichotomous (yes, no) terms.

Data Analysis. Analysis of the qualitative data relied on **thematic analysis**. This involved four steps.

First, all diaries and interview transcripts were carefully read for the major domains into which the material seemed to divide.

Second, these data were then read a second time in an effort to identify specific themes within each domain. For purposes of the present study, a theme was operationally defined as **any set of words, phrases**

or sentences which coherently reflected a specific underlying meaning, feeling or activity. In addition, to be retained in the analysis, any given theme must have been identifiable in the diaries and/or the interviews of not less than 35% of study subjects. In other words, thematic analysis was intended to capture themes representative of study subjects rather than their idiosyncratic thoughts and feelings.

Third, these data were then read a third and final time, with two ends in mind: first, to verify and finalize the list of themes, with an eye to specific linkages across domains; and, second, to select **exemplars**, in the form of quotation extracts, illustrative of each theme (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Exemplars were then placed on 5" x 8" file cards, along with all pertinent identifying information, and then filed by theme. Using this method, a total of 894 quotations extracts were obtained, 604 from the diaries and 290 from the interviews.⁸ Selection from among this set for inclusion in the results section was based on the clarity with which a particular exemplar illustrated a given theme and/or assisted in distinguishing between different perspectives within a given theme. Further, conscious effort was made to ensure that exemplar selections were balanced across the entire sample, thus avoiding the temptation to rely on subjects exceptional in their writing ability. Throughout, exemplars will be identified using a code such as the following: [105F/D SE07]. Translation: subject (control number 105), female (F), diary extract (D) dated September 7 (SE07)(1988). In addition, in order to protect subject confidentiality, exemplars may have been edited, as indicated by the presence of square brackets [].

Finally, the thematic exemplars were re-read once again, this time in search of **metathemes**, that is, central organizing ideas which appear to transcend or crosscut specific domains. Necessarily, metathemes operate at a higher level of inference than the themes from which they derive. Accordingly, they entail some interpretive risk. Their corresponding advantage, however, is that, unlike themes, they dispense with

⁸ While the bulk of the exemplars were drawn from complete subjects, a small proportion were derived from subjects providing partial data, including quotations from both diary records (n=4) and interview transcripts (n=7).

detail and so, hopefully, enable us to see to the heart of those concerns central to the lived experience of university freshmen.

Representativeness. This study is based on a self-selected sample in which no effort was made to ensure representativeness. Nevertheless, there was no obvious basis for thinking that study subjects should be uniquely or distinctively different from all other freshman students. This said, it seemed reasonable to assess the **degree of representativeness** of study subjects compared to other freshman. A useful tool in this respect was the **Incoming Student Survey** since all freshmen were asked to complete this instrument. In fact, about half (about 1500) of the freshman classes actually did so. Accordingly, the responses of the 20 complete female subjects were compared with the responses of the 845 remaining female freshman; responses of the 13 partial female subjects were suppressed. Items on which the two groups were separated by 11 or more percentage points were counted as "different".

The results indicated that across a total of 216 items the two groups were "different" in the above sense on 81 items (37.5%). Further inspection of similar and different items was revealing. With respect to six key demographic indicators, the two groups were virtually identical: age (65%=19 years), family structure (80%=intact), self-rated emotional health (average), self-rated intellectual self-confidence (average), parental income (mode=\$40-\$49,000), parental education (father, mother=high school), and religious preference (self, father, mother: Roman Catholic=25%). It was on a seventh key item, high school grade average, that the two groups differed sharply, with study subjects much more likely than other freshmen to record an average in the "A" range (65% vs 36%).

All other differences could be explained either as a derivative of the difference in high school grade or as an artifact of the small sample size. Examples of the former include: highest degree planned (Ph.D.: 24% vs 9%), self-assessed academic ability (above average: 75% vs 48%), and likelihood of getting a "B" average (very good: 65% vs 41%). Examples of the latter include: summer saving (\$1500-\$3000: 40% vs 26%), helped another student (occasionally: 50% vs 39%) and self-rated social self-confidence (average: 63% vs 52%).

In short, female study subjects were in fact representative of freshman students in most key respects. They were unusual *only* insofar as they entered university with above average grades and with attitudes and expectations consistent with that academic experience.

Impact of Study Involvement. A final methodological (and ethical) issue concerns the impact, both positive and negative, on subjects of their involvement in this study. Evidence in the literature suggests that it should be positive. Pennebaker et al. (1987), for example, asked a sample of undergraduate students to spend 20 minutes a day over four consecutive days writing about their problems. They then completed a questionnaire describing their feelings and also provided blood samples, both at the time and on six-week followup. The results indicated a marked enhancement in the immune response of students who wrote about important (as opposed to trivial) problems they had not shared with others.

Study subjects were asked to complete a far more difficult task and were asked to provide neither questionnaire responses nor blood samples. Nevertheless, their response to involvement in this study was typically highly positive.

Specifically, subjects responded in some combination of *three* ways. First, the majority of subjects complained about the amount of work required to maintain diary entries faithfully. This became increasingly difficult as the term progressed as work to be completed accumulated and exams approached. As one subject put it, "I'm even caught up on this diary. Which takes up a hell of a lot of time. But I like it, it relieves tension." [104F/D OC02]. The exceptions were those subjects who were already accomplished personal diarists (n=4) or those for whom diary writing gradually became "addictive" (n=3).

Second, diary writing came to be perceived by most subjects as associated with a range of unanticipated advantages, as suggested by the following comments:

Writing in this diary helps me get rid of some of the bad feelings and maybe put everything into perspective. [154F/D SE14].

Writing the diary's good because you get to write about your frustrations plus it gets you involved in something which isn't too bad, it gives you a little bit of credibility. [104F/I DE01].

Participating in this study was beneficial to me because it forced me to consider a lot of aspects of my life. The reality of my relationships with my family and friends is something which I would never have taken seriously. The diaries (although I found them to be a pain

at times) will serve as a reminder of my first semester here and all the ups and downs that went with it. [147F/D DE01].

However, the most positive aspect of this study from the perspective of subjects was undoubtedly their on-going involvement with their staff "buddy". In this respect, the following comments speak for themselves:

I must say how glad I am I have these diaries and people to talk to. Thursday, I left feeling much better after talking to [project staff], though I was embarrassed for blubbing and was very self-conscious because I know what I look like after a good cry. [A staff member], another person to talk to called on Friday, just to introduce herself, which was very nice. She said even if I had a crisis at 3:00 in the morning, I can call. [154F/D OC17].

... the first interview [with my buddy] was a very good experience. You get a lot off your chest that have been going through your mind. You talk to people in bits and pieces about various things but it puts things in perspective for you. [101M/I NV28].

I look forward to these meetings [with my buddy] as they give me a time to talk to somebody who has the same [Christian] values as me. We talk of all the things that are of importance to me. [116M/D SE30].

I've found that the best part of this study was getting together with [my buddy]. Hey [name]! Wanna keep this up next term? [113F/D DE10].

Indeed, with respect to the final comment, at least four subjects have, as of this writing, continued their relationship with their "buddies" despite the termination of the study proper. In addition, as the following comment by a "buddy" suggests, there is at least some evidence that for different subjects, either the diary or the interview was a preferred mode of self-expression:

It was interesting to me that the [subject] I met in my interviews was always cheerful and 'up' while the [subject] I met in the diary entries was lonely and exhausted. When [subject] missed one of our meetings, I called her and she really sounded happy to hear from me - our time together seemed to mean a lot to her. [buddy of 133F/I SE19].

In general, then, study involvement, although experienced as demanding for many subjects, was typically seen as a positive and beneficial experience, especially as regards regular and on-going interaction with staff "buddies".

RESULTS

As noted above, the results will be divided into two sections concerned, respectively, with **thematic analysis** and **metathematic analysis**.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Given over 5000 pages of diary and interview material, the resulting thematic analysis was voluminous and complex. In order to make these data accessible, an important distinction is that between **domains**, **subdomains** and **themes**. Initially, the results are divided into three primary domains: **personal**, **interpersonal** and **environmental**. Next, each domain is then further broken down into 2-4 subdomains. Within each subdomain, a series of 2-6 themes were then identified. For easy reference, these themes have been numbered sequentially, with a total of 35 themes cited throughout.

Domain 1: PERSONAL

The **PERSONAL** domain breaks neatly into two subdomains concerned, respectively, with the **psychological** and the **academic** life of study subjects.

Subdomain: PSYCHOLOGICAL

Theme 1: Culture Shock. In generic terms, a **life transition** may be defined as an event or constellation of events which result in a change in an individual's assumptions about the nature of the world and of their personal identity in that world, and therefore requires a corresponding change in their behavior and in their relationship with others significant to them (Schlossberg, 1981).⁹

⁹ For more general discussion of transition through the life cycle, see Adams et al. (1977), Lowenthal et al. (1976), and Schlossberg (1981).

As regards the transition to university, this involves massive dislocation. Included here are some combination of the following: increased academic challenge, reduced academic self-esteem, and the need to learn a new set of academic norms and assumptions (Snyder's (1966) "invisible curriculum"); assimilation of new social norms and values; disruption of ties to former peers and the evolution of ties to a new peer group drawn from an exceptionally diverse pool of eligible others; change in the tempo of daily life; novel living arrangements, both in terms of residence life as well as the physical (if not the psycho-logical) absence of parents; sudden anonymity and isolation among a population of heterogenous strangers much larger in size than previously experienced; threat to one's self-image associated, among other things, with severe challenge to existing and automatically accepted beliefs and assumptions; a longing for home and especially the security it represents (ie., homesickness)(Fisher, 1987; Fisher & Hood, 1987; Fisher et al., 1985, 1986; Johnson, 1980; Patterson, 1988);¹⁰ and, as a function of all of the above, severe and on-going stress (Chickering & McCormick, 1973; Rabinowitz, 1987; Whitman et al., 1984) which, in some cases, is associated with physical symptoms, such as recurrent pain (Greene et al., 1985).

All or some combination of these responses are what Feldman and Newcomb (1969) and Komarovsky (1985) mean when they speak about "culture shock" (see Bennett, 1977; Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 1980; Lokitz & Sprandel, 1976; Moser, 1955). While this is certainly commonplace among freshman students, it is by no means universal. Among Komarovsky's (1985) more than 200 respondents, some 65% initially experienced shock.

Among study subjects, most (85%) initially reported some combination of tension, anxiety, depression, fear, uncertainty, loneliness, isolation, and confusion. Of the few that reported no such response, the following comment was typical:

All in all I think I'm adjusting well. No major culture shock yet. Yeh! [104F/D SE06].

¹⁰ That security rather than home per se may be a key element in homesickness is evidenced by the finding of Fisher and Hood (1987) that homesickness was just as likely among British freshmen who lived at home as lived in residence.

Of those reporting shock, **five responses** in particular stood out. The first response was one of being simply overwhelmed, especially by the sheer size of the population of the University:

I felt really good after the START programme, right after I said, "This is going to be no problem, I'm going to get in there, I'm going to feel at home." But when I actually got here, there were so many people! START, there were a lot of people, but it wasn't anything like this. All these people! [133F/I SE19].

The second response was one of anonymity and isolation among a group of people who were both strangers and, even worse, evidenced foreign attitudes and beliefs:

I don't feel like I belong here. Well, I do get along with a few people on this [residence] floor. But alot of them are so weird. It's hard for me to get used to. They smoke incense, etc., and listen to very strange annoying music. And a lot of the girls have gotten together with the boys on the floor. So I sort of feel left out. [104F/D SE11].

Let's say that things didn't start off as well as I'd anticipated. I found [name 1], who I'd met at START, over at [residence], but for the most part I walked around in a daze surrounded by strangers. After about an hour or so I bumped into [name 2]. Oh joy of joys! She was my roommate at START and we had gotten along very well together. Needless to say I was thrilled to see a friendly and smiling face. [148F/D SE08].

A third common response was one of homesickness. Overall, 67% of subjects were rated **low** on the variable homesickness compared to 29% who were rated **moderate** and 4% who were rated **high**. The following three comments from the same subject describes what **high** homesickness feels like and highlights the importance of social support in mitigating its effects:

Somehow I have got to snap out of this! It's like a wave . For awhile I feel great, like I belong, and then I feel like I'm just not ready for all this.... I think about home, my room, Mom and Dad, [boyfriend], my [high] school, [name!], the security. So often I try to imagine loving it here as so many do, and I can't. I watch my professors and think about how they are all going home to their possessions, their families, a home cooked meal tonight and I envy them tremendously. [154F/D SE12].

We ended up organizing a group of 10 girls and going on the scavenger hunt. I felt very comfortable the whole time and I also saw that I'm not the only one who is feeling somewhat lost at times. So often, being homesick feels like such a solitary thing. [154F/D SE07].

I came back to my room and was lying down again when the phone rang and it was [name]. I had phoned her last night in a real fit and she was worried. I wish she had not called then though because it sent me into tears again. I cry so easily and once I get started I have trouble stopping. [Roommate] was really terrific about it. I feel so embarrassed about being so terribly homesick. She came over and gave me a hug. I needed to know that she understood. [154F/D SE07].

Next, disorientation in time and place was a common, if transitory, response and a rather frightening one since it was unexpected. Consider the following typical example:

Still sick. Worse than yesterday. Last night I had a really bad fever and was half dazed. I couldn't wake last night to get a Kleenex. I was also very bewildered and didn't know where I was. I thought I was at home but I couldn't find anything. It was really scary. Then later on I finally did wake up and cool myself down. That's been happening a lot lately. I'll wake up disoriented not knowing where I am. I guess it's just getting used to a new [residence] house sort of. [104F/D SE14].

Finally, what appear as stress-related physiological responses were also commonly associated with transition:

I feel dizzy. I have felt like this for a few days now. [134F/D SE02].

I took another Anacin for my headache. I have been dizzy lately and have been getting headaches. My Mom says it's because of the stress of this new situation. I don't usually get headaches. [134F/D SE05].

For some reason I feel kind of anxious today. My heart is racing and my mouth is dry. Don't ask me why. [123F/D SE11].

More idiosyncratic responses are also worthy of note as indicative of variation in subject's responses.

For example, the following subject presents as self-conscious to the point of mild paranoia:

Went to the drug store in the U[niversity] C[entre] to buy a new comb. Then I bought some breakfast there. There weren't too many people around but I felt uncomfortable; as though everyone knew that I had no friends and that I was a first year student. [147F/D SE06].

Decided to go eat something. Was going to ask [roommate] if she wanted to come but she was sleeping. Actually I think that she was faking sleep because 5 minutes before I decided to leave she was at her desk figuring out her schedule. [147F/D SE07].

In contrast, the following subject indicates that, in coming to the University, one is simultaneously cutting oneself off from the rest of the world:

I've hardly watched T.V. (only when I'm in [name] room watching a V.C.R. movie or at [residence]) and also it's weird that I've hardly followed any news events. It's as though time [is] sort of standing still. [161F/D SE19].

In addition, among the women only, episodes of crying were typically described in positive terms ("having a good cry"), as an effective way of releasing accumulated tension and dealing with pervasive anxiety.

Significant in this context was the fact that these various indicators of shock failed to dissipate at a uniform rate. For a significant minority of subjects, these responses were slow to fade, with nearly 40%

reporting their recurrence - episodic or regular - to the end of the semester. Equally common was some degree of **affective lability**, that is, rapid mood swings, with a minority of subjects (as in subject 154, above) reporting euphoria in the morning, depression in the afternoon, and frustration or rage at night. In isolated instances, such lability appeared free-floating, unattached to any particular person or event. More typically, such feelings were either directed outwards (towards parents, peers or boyfriends) and/or inwards (towards the self).

Theme 2: Psychophysiological State. Psychophysiological states go beyond mere headaches or dizziness to more complex and enduring conditions such as fatigue, sleep disturbance, illness and weight loss. In general, the literature has accorded only scattered attention to such states. McSherry (1989), for example, has this to say about the "frosh flu",

Predictably unpredictable, Frosh 'Flu usually shows up towards the end of Frosh Week, gathers epidemic momentum in the first few weeks of classes, rages for a couple of weeks before Thanksgiving and then vanishes suddenly as the long Thanksgiving week-end interrupts its transmission pattern. As the name suggests, it begins among incoming first-year students during Disorientation Week, does the rounds of the campus Residences, and spreads to upper-year students via Disorientation leaders before classes start....Symptoms of Frosh 'Flu are not greatly different from those of any other type of 'flu - fever, malaise, generalized aching, sleep disturbance, sore throat, cough, sometimes combined with nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, depending upon the prevailing virus strain.

Similarly, Daniel (1988) summarizes the available research as follows concerning the "poor dietary practices among college and university students",

Melby et al. (1986) found that 69% of undergraduates ate no fruit regularly and 43% ate vegetables less than once per day. Jakobovits (1977) discovered that 47% of college women regularly skipped breakfast; other researchers found that the majority of college women studied believed themselves to be overweight although less than 26% actually were (Vickery et al., 1985).

Thus, both the flu and student dietary practices have received very limited investigation in the literature. Data from the present study suggest that such limited treatment is in fact unwarranted, with a significant proportion of study subjects reporting the effects of various psychophysiological states **throughout the first semester.**

Turning first to the quantitative data, 79% of subjects reported at least one episode of illness,

typically flu-like in character, with the average frequency of illness per subject 1.6, the frequency range 1-4, and the average duration 3-5 days. Virtually every subject (100%) reported chronic fatigue, with varying degrees of severity. A significant minority of subjects (38%) reported at least some difficulty in maintaining sufficient dietary intake defined in terms of meal frequency and meal size. Further, given the latter finding, it was hardly surprising to discover that 21% of subjects, all female, reported limited weight loss over the course of the first semester (5-15 pounds), an ironic finding given that at least as many subjects feared the "Frosh 15", rumored weight gain among freshman females in response to anxiety-based overeating and/or the overconsumption of alcohol.

Finally, while rated variables yield the impression that a majority of subjects experienced considerable subjective stress, quite a different picture emerges from the objective data, as seen below in Table 1. These data show, first, that, relative to the standards derived from adult samples, few subjects displayed psychiatric or psychophysiological symptoms beyond the normal range; second, that that remains true both with regard to individual dimensions as well as all three summary scores; and, third, that such 'normal' scores persisted among subject from September to December.

Assuming that subject reports can be taken at face value - and there is no reason to do otherwise - these data suggest that while the experience of transition was subjectively stressful for most subjects, relative to the extremes of human response under pressure, subjects' responses were within the normal range. Indeed, the fact that so few (4%-12%) shows signs of cognitive and/or psychophysiological dysfunction is likely a tribute to their capacity to respond adaptively to stress.

This skeletal account of psychophysiological states among study subjects, however, tells only part of the story, and is totally mute either about how such processes feel or about the havoc they can play with related academic and social processes.

In an effort to provide a fuller account of subjects' experience, a good place to begin is with the following comment which makes clear that many subjects consciously tried to avoid some of the problems noted above:

Scale	SEPTEMBER						DECEMBER					
	Low		Medium		High		Low		Medium		High	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
SOM	-	0	23	96	1	4	4	20	19	79	1	4
OBS	1	4	20	83	3	12	1	4	22	92	1	4
INS	-	0	24	100	-	0	-	0	24	100	-	0
DEP	-	0	22	92	2	8	-	0	24	100	-	0
ANX	-	0	22	92	2	8	-	0	23	96	1	4
HOS	-	0	23	96	1	4	2	8	22	92	-	0
PHOB	4	17	20	83	-	0	8	33	16	67	-	0
PAR	2	8	22	92	-	0	5	21	19	79	-	0
PSY	-	0	23	96	1	4	2	8	22	92	-	0
GSI	-	0	24	100	-	0	1	4	23	96	-	0
PST	-	0	24	100	-	0	-	0	24	100	-	0
PSDI	-	0	24	100	-	0	-	0	24	100	-	0

KEY: SOM=somatization; OBS=obsessive-compulsive; INS=interpersonal sensitivity; DEP=depression; ANX=anxiety; HOS=hostility; PHOB=phobic anxiety; PAR=paranoid ideation; PSY=psychoticism; GSI=GLOBAL SEVERITY INDEX; PST=positive symptom total; PSDI=positive symptom distress index.

TABLE 1

Low, medium and high stress response of subjects
during September and December (1988).

I then went to play baseball with the house league. It was great fun and we won [score]. It was also good exercise and a great break from studying. I refuse to get the 15 pound frosh gain. I'm taking care of myself. I'm exercising and eating right. [104F/D OC02].

While the "frosh gain" to which this subject refers may well be a real phenomenon, it applied to none of the subjects in this study. On the contrary, **weight loss** was a commonplace experience for all subjects and for the very same reason and with the same effects, as the following comments explain:

I went upstairs to have a shower. I weighed myself and the scale read 92 lbs.! That means that I have lost 15 lbs.! [134F/D OC01]

Almost ready. I am rushing so that I can have breakfast for the first time since coming here. It has been hard trying to get the usual 3 meals per day as there is so much to do. [SE07]. I am woken up by my mother. I have not slept this late in ages. After a massive breakfast, my mother says I have lost weight and after having only two meals a day [for the past two

weeks] I agree with her. [SE17]. No milk, oh no. My milk has gone bad and now there's no cereal. One thing I have learned is that breakfast is important and that without it there is a definite difference in my ability to do activities. [116M/D SE27].

[Rommate's] alarm went off at 6:45 AM. She had thought it might take us 15 minutes to half an hour to get up, so she set it early. Unfortunately, though, we didn't quite make it out of bed until 8:15 - for a 9:00 AM [course] class. Needless to say, we missed breakfast again. [144F/D OC04].

Thus, adequate diet is tied, on the one hand, to subject's academic demands and, on the other hand, to prevailing levels of fatigue. The results are similarly twofold, at least for some subjects: weight loss and/or a degraded capacity to perform academically up to one's potential.

This account sees fatigue as contributing to missed meals which in turn hampers academic performance. This is accurate but incomplete, for fatigue can act independently to undermine performance, as the following comments attest:

I missed my class at 8:00 this morning. Too tired, haven't been getting good sleep. I've been really busy, last weekend I was really upset with my Dad, he's acting strange, and I was worried about my gran and granny. The fact that I'm not getting my homework done has been getting me down. I've been confused in some of my subjects and its been worrying me. [105F/D SE30].

I slept for an hour [in the afternoon] because I was so tired. I haven't been able to sleep well at all this week. I feel really tired at night but as soon as I shut off the light, I'm wide awake and I just toss and turn. [147F/D OC14].

My first class was [course] at 9:10 in the [...] building, room [...]. The class was interesting except I felt drowsy several times. I don't actually fall asleep but it makes concentrating difficult and I cannot read my penmanship. I should get to sleep earlier tonight. [143F/D SE14].

My cold is getting really bad ([girlfirend's] is too). I didn't get to sleep until 5 AM, so I decided to sleep instead of going to my first class [course]. [130M/D SE26].

Here, the story gets more complex: fatigue acts independently to hamper performance, but arises from manifold sources, including the academic workload itself, on-going social relations, free-floating anxiety as well as physical illness. Once again, the latter initially appears as an effect of fatigue. And so it can be, but additional comments picture illness simultaneously as a cause in its own right.

[Subject] has been sick past week or so and is behind in work. Says she has been sick off and on all semester [buddy of 104F/I NV01].

Oh, I'm sick. I'm very tired with this cold and I'm not getting much work done. [120F/D OC01].

Being sick for a week really knocks the stuffing outa your ability to work! [113F/D SE29].

I am back to my old sleeping routine, the one where I only get 5 hours of sleep [per night].
I can't handle this, especially when I have a cold. [119F/D OC26].

These data bring us back full circle. Fatigue, sleep disturbance, missed meals, bouts of illness, the demands of social relationships and academic performance are **not** separate processes; rather, they are all part of the **same** feedback loop, with each facet interacting with every other. For example, lack of sleep, missed meals, and chronic fatigue all act to undermine academic performance. But poor performance motivates increased effort which, in turn, means lack of sleep, chronic fatigue, missed meals and thus increased vulnerability to illness, and so on. I will return to this account later, after more of the key processes in the daily life of freshman students have been put in place.

Theme 3: Adjustment. There is much discussion in the literature concerning the factors which contribute to the successful adjustment of students to university life. This includes such things as social propensity (Baker & Siryk, 1983), strategies for coping with life stress (Perkins et al., 1981; Silber et al., 1966; Stewart & Douglas, 1988), and the attributes of those having adapted well (Van Rooijen, 1986). Attention is also paid to personality factors, family background, social support, level of development (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969), and academic and social self-esteem (Komarovsky, 1985).

In this context, lack of systematic consideration of the notion of **adaptation** itself is striking by its omission. Here, a good place to begin is with the previously cited definition of **transition**. Recall that this refers to **movement** between two states, and, moreover, one involving an irretrievable and non-trivial **change** through time, both in how individuals see themselves as well as how they perceive and interact with those around them. Assuming further that life events, such as transition, affect not only individuals but also those with whom they are reciprocally and interdependently related (Pruchno et al., 1984), transition can be properly seen as involving not just individuals, but indeed all those significant to them; it is thus a **process** rather than a state, and both **social** and psychological, not solely the latter. As regards the social character of transition, a final notion can be derived from McCubbin and Patterson's (1983) **double ABCX** model of

family adaptation to normative transition. This conceptualizes the process of family transition - presumably including the departure of a child to university - as involving **three** phases: **crisis**, **adaptation** and **consolidation**.

The crisis phases may be likened to culture shock, that is, a period characterized by instability, disorganization and stress. The adaptation phase essentially involves reequilibration, that is, return to a new but stable, predictable and routine pattern of behavior, although this may take either "bonadaptive" (ie., functional) or "maladaptive" (ie., dysfunctional) forms. Finally, consolidation may be akin to development, that is, the long-term integration and assimilation of these new patterns and the lessons learned in their acquisition.

In this sense, **freshman adaptation** may be seen as a short-term phase in the transition process involving the evolution of a new but stable pattern of behavior functionally or dysfunctionally related to the perceived demands of university life, both academic and social. As such, freshman students would be expected to distribute on a temporal continuum, with some adapting quickly, others more slowly, and still others not at all.

This formulation finds support both in the literature as well as among study subjects. Holdaway and Kelloway (1987), for example, report that within two months or less of their arrival at the University of Alberta (Canada), 49% of their 641 respondents felt "at ease" compared to 17% who did not after a full academic year. Similarly, Komarovsky (1985) notes that a "minority" of her 232 female respondents remained "alienated" throughout the first year.

As for study subjects, 67% were rated **fast** adjusters - having established a relatively stable routine by the end of September - compared to 33% who were rated **slow** adjusters, taking up to the end of the semester to complete their adjustment process.

Interestingly, the responses of the former were relatively homogeneous, typically combining elements of enthusiasm, contentment and increased independence, as exemplified by the following comments:

I really can't think of anything else. Just that I love where I'm living and so far I love University. I love the fact the Frosh Boys were running up and down the campus in wet underwear. [104F/D SE20].

It seemed that I came to University to escape a lot of things and to become my own person with some freedom. I have space to grow here. When I go home, all the things I escaped are still there. So there is a lot of tension. A lot of hatred on my part. I've become such a happy person since I've been here. I think that's why I like it here so much. [104F/D NV06]

It's only been a few weeks. It sounds funny; it didn't take that long for me [to adjust], but the first week or so, you're a bit disoriented, you're not really organized. You're starting to think, by the end of the first week, you're starting to think, 'work's coming'. And you've got to get into a bit of a routine. Once I did that, I think I started to settle down. [101M/I SE28].

When I feel good, comfortable, things like the future and class worries don't bug me. I'm still aware and concerned [about them], but not paranoid and frightened. I think I will probably work more efficiently now too. [154F/D SE21].

This said, it must be emphasized that even among those who adjusted quickly, there were still ups and downs to deal with, as in the following:

I'm so depressed and frustrated. I miss [boyfriend]. I don't know what to do about [male on same residence floor], I'm so behind in my homework, and I wish [male in another residence] would get some professional help or something so he can get over his problems [of depression and suicidal thoughts]. He's hurting my friends and me also. And there's no way in the world I can read two plays in [course 1], four chapters in [course 2] and one in [course 3] in two days. [104F/D SE27].

While such ups and down were a fact of life for all students, they were particularly problematic for those slow to adjust, as in the following comment:

Later called [female]. Went to her room for a couple of hours. Didn't do much homework. We just talked most of the time. Felt good to talk to someone my age about how I've been feeling recently about meeting new people and being under pressure about school, etc. In some ways I feel like I have adjusted and in other ways I feel alone and scared sometimes. I know it takes time but I wish it wouldn't take so long! [169F/D OC11].

In addition to the time required for the reemergence of stable patterns of behavior, for slow adjusters those features of university that were a pleasure for fast adjusters - new found independence from parents, new and interesting friends - were, in contrast, a constant source of distress. Consider the following:

I thought that when I came here, I would make a lot of new friends and I'd have a great time; it's not working out the way I thought it would. Both [roommate] and I, and [close female friend] too, have found that a few of the girls in our [residence] house are nice enough to say hello [to], but most of them are are very unfriendly. [147F/D SE30].

We left [parents home] to come here [to the university]. Just as we got on the highway I remembered that I didn't have my toothbrush so we had to turn around. On the way here I felt really sick to my stomach; I wished I weren't coming back [to the university]. [147F/D NV01].

Anyway, it seem[s] pointless to put down anymore of what I feel and what I do. I don't do much. I eat, sleep and study. I feel good most times, great occasionally, and homesick periodically. [154F/D SE26].

Even so, the fact is that nearly all freshman students do eventually adjust, though it may take them all of the first semester to do so, as the following comments suggest in retrospect:

First semester was hard because everything was new to me and I didn't know what the workload would be like or how much [little] free time I'd have. I'm used to everything now and I've learned from the mistakes I've made. Next semester should be a lot better. [147F/D DE01].

Generally, things are much better around here! I have been hav[ing a] good time talking and having fun! I do miss home still, just not as often or as desperately. I still take it one day at a time 'cause they are not all good. You just do the best you can. [154F/D NV14].

This hopeful conclusion is balanced by the minority of students who never do manage to adjust. There was one such student among study subjects. Subject #105, after much soul searching, finally decided to drop out of the university in November. While her reasons for doing so were complex - a fact that will become evident as the bases for her decision emerge in later sections - one of them has to do with her inability to adjust to the academic and social demands of university life, as the following comments attest:

[Name], my sister, phoned at 9:00 [AM] or so. I was worried about school, I was crying, upset all night. Talked to [name], my [male] friend; he helped me a lot with physics. Not happy! [105F/D SE28].

At 9:30 [PM] I talked to my R.A. She's worried about me. She thinks I'm making a mistake [in dropping out]. I don't think I am though. I fast-tracked through high school, had no fun at all and expected to have a good time at least a little when I came to [the University of] Guelph but I haven't and it bothered me. I'm going to take the rest of the year off and have a good time and see what I really want to do. [105F/D OC31].

Parenthetically, there is no hint in any of the above comments that these subjects might have been exposed to one or more untoward events prior to their arrival at the university which might have influenced their subsequent adjustment. This is consistent with a stereotype which would note the relatively privileged background of these young people and thus "naturally" assume that they had been buffered from the darker sides of life. In fact, such was not the case. Consider the following: just over 50% of these subjects reported personal contact with **death** (through accident, illness or suicide) within the past two years, either among

their extended family and/or their peer network;¹¹ 20%-30% reported personal experience with **alcoholism**, **divorce**, **out-of-wedlock pregnancy**, **non-academic failure** and **anorexia/bulimia**; and, 5%-10% noted personal experience with **physical disability**, **learning disability**, **stomach ulcers**, **arthritis**, **migraine headaches**, **date rape**, and **childhood sexual abuse**. While the specific impact of these events or conditions on the freshman adjustment of these subjects is not clear, we can at least dispense with any stereotype which would attribute their adjustment to their naivete or inexperience.

What these comments do make clear is that adjustment is a complex process, with freshman students displaying much variation as regards the speed with which they accomplish it and the factors salient to it. In this regard, it seems noteworthy that while authors in the literature stress a range of individual attributes, study subjects tend to place more weight on social processes. This is a topic to which we will return repeatedly as data accumulate.

Theme 4: Self-Esteem. As noted previously, for many freshman students, the transition to university represents a severe challenge, both academically and socially. In this regard, an important resource concerns how the individuals in question feel about themselves on both dimensions, that is, their level of **academic** and **social self-esteem** or **self-confidence**.¹²

With respect to life transitions, a common response involves temporary reduction in self-esteem (Sprenkle & Cyrus, 1983) which, in turn, restricts perceived opportunities for growth and change. On the one hand, this may relate to fear and apprehension about what lays ahead. Freshman students, for example, are often very unsure about their ability to measure up to what they perceive as the "high" academic and social demands of the university (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987; Palladino & Tryon, 1978), fears which may (Stake, 1984) or may not (Komarovsky, 1985) dissipate with experience. On the other hand, it may relate to the availability of social support (Lefcourt et al., 1984), both from parents (Cooper & Robinson, 1987)

¹¹ One subject reported the loss of 11 friends over the past four years to traffic accidents associated with alcohol use.

¹² For a thorough discussion of psychological theories of the self and related research, see Wylie (1979).

and from peers (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969). While such support is important for all freshman students, this is more likely to be true of women than men (Harris & Anttonen, 1985).

In a sense, these formulations represent two halves of the same coin, the former concentrating on internal processes and individual attributes, the latter attending to external or behavioral processes and social attributes. In general, study subjects supported neither model without qualification; rather, they tended to perceive social self-esteem as a function of relations with others whereas academic self-confidence was seen more in terms of individual ability, albeit mediated in part by how one is seen academically by others.

Before elaborating on these assertions, a word is in order about study subjects self-reported self-confidence. Of particular interest here is the fact that three such measures were available, the first derived from the Incoming Student Survey, the second based on the rating of their diaries, and the third based on the SDTI-2. Survey data indicated that a majority of study subjects perceived themselves as "average" in terms of both their intellectual (70%) and social (63%) self-confidence. In contrast, the diary-based rating tell a rather different story, with the majority of subjects describing themselves in terms of low self-confidence, both academic (63%) and social (75%). Finally, as seen below in Table 2, while the social development of a clear majority of subjects were within the normal range, a substantial minority (12%-33%) were "low" or immature as regards autonomy, developing purpose and interpersonal relations.

The qualitative data provide support both for the greater validity of the diary-based ratings as well as the assertions noted above. A good place to begin is with the central basis for university attendance: academic performance. The following comments exemplify the view of most study subjects:

I have a few worries about the academic side of things here, mostly things like "can I handle the course load and still have time for myself" and "will I have enough sense to use my time well this semester". I know I have the ability to do well, and I'm still shooting for 80s and 90s, although as long as I'm satisfied I've tried my best, I will accept whatever marks I get (unless they're below 60!). [113F/D SE06]. [After one semester, this subject had a 'C' average.]

I'm an average educated person who finds it difficult to get the marks necessary to continue on in my education. [116M/D SE04]. [After one semester, this subject had a 'B' average.]

Such limited academic self-confidence among the majority of subjects was matched by even lower social self-confidence, as the following comments suggest. Note in particular the final comment which implies

that low social self-esteem was a widespread phenomenon.

I find it hard sometimes to feel that I belong because of my personality, and I know that it's my personality that ... Like I've always been really shy and nervous in new situations. And everybody seems to know somebody and be having a really good time. So that makes me feel like kind of abnormal or something, for feeling bad. Not that I expect everybody to help me, I just find it hard sometimes to fit in, in the general population. Just talking, doing things, or the parties or whatever. Everybody already seems to have their group of friends and I wonder how they did that so quickly! [154F/I SE27].

I always thought I was independent but I don't think I really am. The way people think of me and what I do is really important. There's still things I'll do just because that's what I want to do. But a lot of times, I'll think, "they'll think I'm stupid if I do this", and I'll try not to as much. I used to think I was really independent. But come to think of it, look at it closer, it's definitely important what people think about me. [133F/I DE14].

I just saw [male], my START leader at the U.C. again before coming to class. I wish I had the nerve to go up to him and say "hi", but I just can't. I suffer from the stupid fear that everyone I meet will forget me as soon as I'm gone. It really bothers me and I think that's why I'm so shy and nervous around people. That and I really don't have a lot of self-confidence. [120F/D SE22].

TASK	SCORE					
	Low		Medium		High	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Developing Autonomy	6	25	18	75	-	-
Emotional	8	33	15	63	1	4
Instrumental	1	4	22	92	1	4
Interdependence	8	33	14	58	2	8
Developing Purpose	6	25	17	71	1	4
Educational Plans	3	12	21	87	-	-
Career Plans	8	33	13	54	3	12
Lifestyle Plans	4	17	17	71	3	12
Interpersonal Relations	7	29	16	67	1	4
Opposite Sex	5	21	15	62	4	17
Peers	3	12	21	87	-	-
Tolerance	13	54	10	42	1	4

TABLE 2

Student development scores of study subjects.

[Roommate] convinced me to go with everyone from our floor to Derks [an on-campus pub]. It was a super time! As [roommate] put it, "I was a hit". Every slow song, someone asked me to dance; people smiled, the guys at the table teased about how I drank beer from the jug, generally, I got lots of attention. After that, I felt I had a strong grip on my self confidence and identity because people enjoyed my company and I was just being myself. [112F/D SE22].

I walked through the U.C. on my way to class (as I always do). It was very crowded, and no one else seemed to be alone. I didn't get insecure or anything like that, but it seems as if most people here travel in herds. [113F/D SE08].

The comments to this point suggest, first, that academic and social confidence are independent processes, and, second, that they are immutable. The next set of comments suggests neither are true. As regards the former, for example, the following comment suggests that indeed academic and social self-esteem interact to a significant extent:

I got back here at one [PM], then did [course] from 1:30 'til 5:00. It got REALLY frustrating at times - most of it was OK, but every now and then I didn't understand what was going on. I HATE that! At 5:00 I called [boyfriend], who was sleepy. During the phone call, I started to realize how frustrated I was, and how lonely this weekend's been without anyone else here. I was in a fair state after I hung up, and cried for awhile out of tiredness, loneliness and frustration. [113F/D OC02].

As regards the latter, that is, change in self-confidence, the following comments suggest that, over the course of the first semester, some subjects increased their self-confidence while others have had theirs eroded.

Yeah, I feel a lot more part of it then when I first came here. I don't feel like a first year student anymore. The age difference isn't that much and everybody just pulls together. I feel a lot more confident. I don't feel I have to stay at home and wait for somebody else to do something, I can go out and do it myself. That's a good feeling. And I've gotten to know a lot more people, both male and female. Not a lot of them are close friends, but they're friends. [133F/I DE14].

Inferior feeling overruled by feeling of success, prepared for difficult exam, knew majority of answers undoubtedly. This confidence encouraged more confidence. Before ran around in jeans and teeshirts, no makeup, hair casual. Began to care about appearance again, rely on looks for part of identity, feel more like my former self where I always took care to make myself look good. [112F/D OC12].

Sometimes when you just walk in on a party, at first in the semester everybody was friendly with everybody because we were all together and now everybody's found their own little group and they've all paired off and you interrupt that little group you're thought of not as wrong but as interrupting that little group and you don't know what they're talking about. So sometimes I feel a little out of it, a little lost. I've always been a little shy at first around people. I'm not afraid to meet people but I'm shy. INTERVIEWER: Sounds like you don't feel quite as confident though as when we talked the first time [in September].

I'm not as confident, I admit to that. INTERVIEWER: How about your academics though? Even my academics I've lost a bit. Yes, because I thought I was good at art until I went to art class. I just feel less ... because I'm in competition with people who are a heck of a lot smarter than me I think. I feel less confident there too but I don't feel too bad. When I was in high school all my teachers said I was a terrible writer and I couldn't put my thought down on paper and when I'm getting essays back that are [Bs] and [As] I want to take those essays and shove them you know where to some of those teachers back home! [104F/DE01].

I was feeling really really confident, it's like there's no question or doubt, I'm going to go into university and I'm going to walk out with my BA in four years. Like there's no question. I'm just going to go right along [like] how I always went along in [high] school. I never had to worry about failing. But now, I'm worried about failing a lot. My confidence has dropped right down to the floor. [156 F/I DE01]. [Subject ended the first semester with a 'C' average.]

Freshman self-esteem, then, appears a complex consequence of the **connections one makes to some set of significant others**. This was especially apparent with regard to social self-esteem with respect to which relations with others was critical. Concomitantly, as peer relations varied through time, so too did the social self-esteem of study subjects. For the majority, as their peer network slowly expanded through time, so their social self-esteem slowly rose. For others, the reverse could be true; for those slow to evolve a stable peer network, their self-esteem, low to start, also rose with painful slowness, making for a distressing first term.

Academic self-esteem, in contrast, involved a rather more complex arrangement. In part, academic self-esteem appeared to dependent on successful academic performance (ie., **grades**) as a means of proving to themselves that their skills, so successful in high school, were up to the challenge represented by the university. But success in isolation was merely a pyrrhic victory; to be savored, it needed to be shared. Furthermore, social and academic self-esteem interacted; the inability to establish a stable peer network could and did interfere with the willingness of these students to dedicate themselves fully to the academic task. In this sense, satisfying **connections** with peers, and thus high or at least rising social self-esteem, was salient to **both** academic self esteem as well as academic performance.

Discussion

On the basis of data from the **personal** subdomain, freshman students can be divided into **three** groups with respect to their response to the transition from high school to the university. For 20%-33%, that transition was comparatively effortless. Disorientation, homesickness, isolation, and so on, were all minimal. Similarly, psychophysiological symptoms, such as dizziness, headache, and the like, if they occurred at all, were minimal; several did not even experience any physical illness. Rather, their arrival at university was marked primarily by enthusiasm, excitement, and discovery. By the end of September, a stable peer network had been established and a stable routine put in place. Consequently, their social self-esteem was typically relatively high and this, in turn, tended to mitigate the impact of any academic reverses.

The next group comprised 33%-50% of study subjects whose response to transition was "average". That is, some culture shock was commonplace, with all of its concomitants, including confusion, disorientation, loneliness and homesickness. In turn, these responses were often accompanied by a range of psychophysiological indicators of stress, such as dizziness, headache, dry mouth, nausea, palpitations and the like; physical illness was also nearly universal. However, this range of responses, though distressing while they lasted, was typically episodic and of short duration. Consequently, students in this group too adjusted quickly, with a stable peer network and a stable routine both in place between the end of September and the end of October. Consequently, despite academic reverses in many cases, these were largely mitigated by social self-esteem that was either high or at least rapidly rising.

The final group, comprising 20%-33% of study subjects, experienced the first semester as a taxing, difficult, and distressing period. For these subjects, culture shock was massive, with disorientation, confusion and isolation correspondingly severe. Homesicknesses was typically moderate to severe, as was the range of stress-related psychophysiological symptoms; repeated episodes of illness were also commonplace. Consequently, adjustment was usually slow, often not complete until the end of the first term; it was from among this group that the only drop out occurred. Further, social self-esteem, usually low on entry, was very slow to rise and, in some cases, it appeared to alter very little through time. A stable peer network,

however, was usually in place by the end of the term. Reverses in the academic sphere, coupled with the interaction between academic and social processes, if anything, only made matters worse by impeding the process of making new friends.

While coherent, the above account of freshman transition is clearly incomplete and ironically so. It is incomplete because it "explains" the linkages **between** themes by inferential means only, in the absence of any data. The bases of "fast" or "slow" adjustment, the means by which subjects established a stable peer network, the role of parents, and so forth, all remain vague or unclear. Furthermore, while subjects' comments contain numerous hints regarding a larger **context** within which connections between themes would become apparent, the contours of that context remain obscure to this point. The best that can be done is simply to flag key issues and wait for further relevant data to accumulate.

All of this is decidedly ironic because it so precisely matches the existing state of much of the freshman literature. As noted in the introduction, this typically consists of a series of studies each of which explores a single dimension of freshman life but without demonstrating any association or relationship between that dimension and any other. In other words, the ecological validity of most of the existing research is low because it fails to acknowledge the salience of any larger context within which all single dimensions are invariably imbedded. One of the key tasks in exploring subsequent domains and subdomains will be to establish and describe the contours of the context within which the freshman transition process unfolds.

Subdomain: ACADEMIC

Theme 5: Transition. As noted previously, entering freshmen are typically apprehensive about both social and academic matters. Of the two, however, there is consensus in the literature that the latter is paramount. Immediately prior to entry, this touches on a range of topics, including: a desire for greater preparation in mathematics, english, study skills (Jacobs, 1985), and time budgeting (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987; Scherer & Wygant, 1982); and, concerns about course choice and scheduling, choice of major (Sagar-

in et al., 1980), and vocational and career planning (Brinkerhoff & Sullivan, 1982; Moore et al., 1981). Following entry, to these concerns are added apprehension about life goals (Goodson, 1981; Zuckerman, 1984), university routine, finances (Fisher & Hood, 1987), workload, academic testing (Stewart & Douglas, 1988), library use (Harris & Anttonen, 1985) and academic success (Bean & Bradley, 1986), with academic matters generally the single most salience source of student stress (Archer & Lamnin, 1985; Linn & Zeppa, 1984; Perkins et al., 1981; Whitman et al., 1984; cf. Palladino & Tryon, 1978).

While providing useful insights into freshmen student academic concerns, the above characterization simply fails to capture the sheer magnitude of the **discrepancy** between high school and university as places in which to do academic work.

One side of this emerges from subjects' responses to the Incoming Survey. Relevant findings include the following: 24% ultimately plan on getting a Ph.D.; 75% rate their academic ability as "above average"; 70% rate their drive to achieve as "above average"; 42% rate a university education as "very important" in getting a better job; 63% want a university education in order to "make more money"; 74% agree somewhat that a university education increases one's "earning power"; 84% think that gaining financial wealth is somewhat important; 75% expect to graduate with honours; finally, in high school, 40% studied more than 11 hours per week while 70% spent one hour or more per week interacting with a teacher outside of class. The thrust of these data may be summarized as follows: this is a talented group of students who want very much to succeed, plan on doing so, are not afraid of hard work, and are accustomed to a stable and presumably supportive relationship with one or more teachers in their pursuit of academic success. In this sense, university life is seen as more or less an extension of their high school experience.

Once at the university, however, for most subjects this positive view was quickly and permanently transformed, replaced by a series of problems which collectively emphasized that all the things with which they were secure in high school were now **very different** in university. One of the first and most noticeable such differences concerns the matter of **structure**; compared to high school, the university appeared to offer almost unlimited freedom and independence. The response of a minority was one of joy bordering on

euphoria. For the majority, however, it felt more like being abandoned, suddenly transformed from an individual into a number, standing alone against all others. Consider the following comments:

I really like how unstructured my class days are. I love having an hour or two between classes to do homework or sleep or make phone calls or shop or whatever I have to do. [144F/D SE13].

I didn't find myself having to make a big adjustment to being in much larger classes. I like the larger classes as well as the fact that we're free to come or go whenever we want. High school classes seem almost ridiculous; you have to ask if you want to go to the bathroom, or you have to explain why you're late. [147F/D DE01].

So far [university life] is different because there's no one checking up on you. And no Mom and Dad worrying. No Mom and Dad, yeah! It really astonishes me. I suppose around that kind of thing particularly, about the freedom. It astonishes me how [the people in charge of the university] don't care what you do - as long as you're not destroying property or hurting people. [144F/I SE15].

Over the last week or so it's really been hitting me how much different the atmosphere and even the general attitude at university are than what I was used to at home. The people here are more varied in ethnic groups, religious and moral views, political views, clothing styles, social habits, etc. than what I'm used to. I really enjoy it. Something else that just astounds me is the freedom we have here! I just can't get used to the fact that there's no one looking over my shoulder telling me what to do and what not to do (except my conscience). I'm finally getting a chance to prove myself to myself and my parents. I don't really know how I'm doing so far; I've just barely started. But all the same I'm glad for the chance. The thing that really bothers me, though, is how it's sort of "every man for himself" in a lot of ways - going into class, for example. If you want to get a good seat, you run over everybody you can - push and shove, step on toes, elbow, cut off people, whatever. It's like that in food lines, walking on sidewalks, going in and out of doors. People are looking after number one. I can even see it in myself sometimes and I don't like it because I don't like people doing it to me. [144F/D SE19].

To make matters worse, the professors, unlike the teachers of high school days, seemed rather more distant, although occasionally one stood out because of their excellence as a teacher.

It's an entirely different world! Is what I think! People just (pause) Professors don't care, as far as they're concerned, you're a number. And that's what I find quite a shock, whereas in high school, teachers cared about you. And here, you're sitting here going, "My tuition is paying for his paycheck. He doesn't care!" As long as he's up there teaching, he's fine. [137F/I SE15].

Professor [name]. He's one of the best. I think I missed one class and that's because I went home. The other ones, you sort of, well, if you wake up in the morning and you really can't get out bed to go to this class, and you don't go. Nobody cares if you're there or not. But I never did that with [course]. I went to all of them. [162F/I DE05].

Back in high school, such experience might predictably be mitigated by support from a stable peer group within the class setting. Not so apparently at university, with the anonymity of the university doing strange things to the people who do attend.

Lectures are beginning to form a routine. I don't talk much to anyone except for the beginning of the lectures. But even then you can't really talk much. Deep inside I keep hoping that it's going to get better. Maybe it's me, maybe I seem unapproachable to other people. If so, it's probably because I try to cover up my insecurity. [133F/D SE20].

That's one thing too, your past is erased. That's what a lot of people are starting to do. A lot of people are staking their territory in the sense of who they are. Which is what I've done too, I've kind of, but I've settled back to who I was. Like I said, high school people play roles and people get misconceptions about you, and they're gone. What you like about who you were is what you settle down into. So you don't live the myths. 'Cause everybody in high school, if you know a lot of people, if you're fairly popular, you gain a reputation. A lot of people think of reputation as just a bad reputation, but I'm thinking of reputation just as stories people've heard about you and so on. That baggage goes with you in high school and it adds up. But university, that's gone. And that's an advantage, and probably that first couple of weeks of being less sure of your self. I guess if that's what comes out of it, if you get rid of some of the old baggage you wanted to get rid of. [101M/I SE28].

Furthermore, such dynamics are compounded by the fact that academic work at the university involves a level of demand greater than that experienced in high school, and thus requires correspondingly more self-discipline.

I had my first real lecture today. It was [course]. It was a real challenge to try and understand what he was saying, and then write it down at the same time. I keep wondering if I'm writing the right thing down. [119F/D SE12].

It's not a big change from high school, there's just more volume. It's hard when I'm used to three classes and now I have five. Sixty pages for one chapter, and if you're expected to know 12 chapters, it just builds up. [162F/I DE05].

Yeah, it's harder than high school and it's more independent, you have to be more disciplined about it. [101F/I SE28].

Additional complications adhered to the fact that freshman students were under some pressure to make fateful decisions regarding choice of major and career planning at a time when most were simply not ready.

I'm taking [program]. So it can lead to a lot of things. I'm just haven't decided yet, I haven't enough background yet, I don't know. It's hard because people will ask me or friends of the family will ask me what I want to do and I don't know, I don't know what to say yet. [169F/I SE15].

Such pressures and the consistent **discrepancy** between the experience of high school and the reality of university acted to exacerbate culture shock and homesickness, leading in some cases to near (if temporary) immobility and in others to the decision to drop out.

[Roommate] is not well. She has a sore throat and a fever. Both she and [female friend] still have been feeling homesick and have wanted to go home this weekend. It is nice to know I am not the only one feeling this way. During my [course 1] and [course 2] classes I felt a lump in my throat. It was all so intimidating. I came back here to my "room" and thought about things. I shouldn't do that. It only makes me sad. [154F/D SE08].

I want to make it clear though that [subject] is quitting University, not because she does not like learning, but that she does not like learning in the rushed, over generalized way that first year learning seems to be full of. [buddy of 105F/I NV04].

[Subject] had thought before she moved onto campus that she knew the campus quite well, because she had been here a number of times. knew her way around, knew some people from START and was quite confident about her academic competence. She had felt excited and confident and competent. She'd been away from home for fairly extended periods and had anticipated home-sickness. The reality of moving onto campus was, from the beginning, a real jolt. She felt disjointed, lost in the crowds, there were so many expectations for her to measure up to, the academic work was of such a different nature from high school, she was "lost and alone" from almost the first moment. That there should be such a complete disjunction of reality from expectation had rendered her almost unable to function. [buddy of 169F/I OC13].

The academic transition to university, then, primarily involves surmounting a series of major **differences**. For some, these differences were a breath of fresh air compared to the stifling atmosphere of high school; they welcomed the academic demands as fair and equitable in return for freedom and independence. For the majority, a more apt description of their perception of these differences would be one of intimidation. The academic demands of the university represented a severe challenge which, in turn, required major adjustment. Apart from the nature and volume of the work itself, perhaps the most upsetting of these adjustments concerned the **social character** of university classes and the **lack of any relationship with the faculty**. Each of these concerns will be explored further later in this subdomain.

Theme 6: Grades. If the preceding interpretation is correct - that most freshman students experience the academic demands of university as severely challenging - then that raises serious questions regarding their eventual academic performance. The latter has been a major topic of concern for some time,

seems to be some concensus in the literature. Mathiasen (1984), for example, based on his review of 60 such studies, concluded that high school performance, entrance exams, study habits and parent-child relations were each reasonably predictive of academic performance (see Feldman & Newcomb, 1969). Similarly, Allan et al. (1983), in a Canadian study, found that grade 13 marks were a reliable predictor of subsequent university performance at the end of year 1. As for the likelihood of maintaining high school grades in university, Komarovsky (1985) reports that 45% of her respondents sustained their grades compared to 49% who did not and thus underwent a "crisis of self-confidence".

Exploration of the bases of performance will be the focus of the next several themes. Here, the **actual performance** of subjects will be addressed using data from the **SESG Tracking System**. These data are displayed in Table 3 on the following page.

The results tend to confirm **not** subjects' confident response to the Incoming Survey (see above, **Theme 5**), but rather their uncertain and decidedly tentative academic self-esteem (see above, **Theme 4**). Thus, in leaving grade 13, 42% of study subjects entered the university with a grade average in the 'A' range. After one semester, this distrubition had changed radically, with only 13% in the 'A' range and 39% in the 'C' range. By the end of two semesters, the distribution had changed only slightly and **downward**, with 9% in the 'A' range, 39% in the 'C' range and 9% in the 'D' range.

These data indicate that most study subjects experienced some diminuation in their grade averages, but does not specify **who** changed and in what **direction**. The latter data are displayed in the **CHANGE** columns. In terms of the shift from high school to university (semester 1), only 9% of study subjects increased their grade by one grade point level while 65% decreased their grade by one or two levels; only 26% of study subjects maintained their high school leaving grade. Having established a grade in semester 1, this tended to remain stable in semester 2. Thus, from semester 1 to semester 2, 74% of study subjects maintained their grade; only 9% were able to increase it by one level while only 17% decreased it by one or two levels. As for the shift from high school to the end of year 1 (ie., semester 2), the trend is clearly negative, with 65% of study subjects recording a decrease of one or two grade levels compared to 30% who maintained their high school grade and only 4% who actually went up a grade level. These data provide

GRADE	GRADES						CH	CHANGE							
	<u>HS GR</u>		<u>UG1 GR</u>		<u>UG2 GR</u>			<u>CH1</u>		<u>CH2</u>		<u>CH3</u>			
	f	%	f	%	f	%		f	%	f	%	f	%		
A	10	42	3	13			2	9	+1	2	9	1	4	2	9
B	12	50	10	43			10	43	0	6	26	7	30	17	74
C	2	8	9	39			9	39	-1	11	48	10	43	3	13
D	-	-	1	4			2	9	-2	4	17	5	22	1	4
n	24		23				23			23		23		23	

KEY: HS GR=high school grade average; UG1 GR=semester 1 grade average; UG2 GR=semester 2 grade average; CH1=change in grade average from high school to semester 1; CH2=change in grade average from high school to semester 2; CH3=change in grade average from semester 1 to semester 2; CH=change code: +1=increase one grade point; 0=no change in grade average; -1=decrease one grade point; -2=decrease two grade points.

TABLE 3

High school and university grade averages and changes in grade averages from one to the other.

ample support for two conclusions: first, few freshman students, whatever their in-coming grade average, will maintain that average in university; second, in terms of level of variation, semester 1 grade averages are a much better predictor of first year (ie., semester 2) grades than grade 13 marks.

As to who changed grade, a separate analysis was run, first with respect to the **stability** of grades and second with respect the **grade range** 'A' or 'B'. As to the former, entering students with a average grade of 'B' were more likely to maintain that grade in university than students with any other in-coming grade average. For example, of study subjects who entered with a 'B' average (n=12), a third maintained their grade at semester 1 compared to only 20% of those who entered with a average grade of 'A' (n=10). Similar

results obtained when examining the shift from high school to semester 2: 42% of entering 'Bs' maintained their grade compared to 10% of entering 'As'.

As to the latter, achievement of an 'A' or a 'B' average, the findings favor study subjects who entered university with an 'A' average. For example, as regards the shift from high school to semester 1, 70% of entering 'As' got an 'A' or a 'B' average compared to 42% of entering 'Bs'. As for the shift from high school to semester 2, similar findings apply: 60% of entering 'As' achieved an 'A' or a 'B' average compared to 50% of entering 'Bs'. Within the same time interval, the converse was also true: whereas 50% of entering 'Bs' got a 'C' or a 'D', this held for 40% of entering 'As'. Thus, grade 13 marks do retain some validity as a predictor of university performance; the higher the entering grade average, the more likely successful performance in university. However, the probabilistic character of this statement must be emphasized; with 40% of entering 'As' and 50% of entering 'Bs' ending semester 2 with a 'C' or a 'D', a high entering grade average is hardly a guarantee of academic success in university.

Theme 7: Workload. The fact that most entering freshmen experience a decline in marks from high school does not, of course, explain why this should be. The themes in the balance of this subdomain speak directly or indirectly to this issue. One of the first concerns, traditional in the literature, is freshmen complaints about the workload (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969). Study subjects were no different, with nearly all of them (96%) rated as **experiencing difficulty in keeping up with the academic demands of their courses**.

Knowing this, however, says nothing about what having such a workload **means** or what it **feels** like. For this information we must turn to the qualitative data. A good place to begin is with the sheer number of hours it takes to do what needs doing academically during the first semester. On this issue, the comments of study subjects speak eloquently about the long hours of work.

Finally, I hit the books again at 8:30 [PM] and worked until 2:00 AM. Well, that not true. I never quite made it to bed. I went down to the study room around 12:00 and parked there. I studied for a long time. At some point, one guy from my lounge, [name], came down to study and we chatted for a while then shut up and studied. [Name] gave up at 4:00 AM and went to bed but I stayed there until 5:30 [AM], then went up to the lounge for half an hour. At 6:00 [AM] I went for a study break and had a nice looong shower, then went back to the lounge to attempt to study again at 7:30 [AM] but my body kept shutting off, so I went and laid down for an hour and a half. [144F/D OC24].

I had a bite to eat in the U.C., wrote up my summary for my computer project, worked on it and almost got a few parts working. If I get a mark for each hour spent on this, even if it was out of 100, I'd pass. This is an exercise in futility and frustration. [151M/D NV08].

We went back to our rooms. I did about 3.5 hours of [course]. Then I became frustrated and I want to get enough sleep tonight. I have done between 6.5 and 7 hours of homework this weekend. (That is not including the time that it took when I was talking to someone or snoozing.) I have not accomplished nearly enough. I am nearly on top of my [course] but I am behind in everything else, mainly because of the review plus the normal workload. I am slightly worried that I won't get enough done. [134F/D SE18].

Spent time in my room. Slept. Did some homework. Seems like I have endless reading. But I still remember the words of wisdom from one friend, "Don't worry, you will always be behind." How true. [104F/D SE20].

As difficult as such effort was, it became still more difficult when the courses in question failed to hold the student's interest, that is, were experienced as boring or irrelevant.

Well, anyway, I tried to study but I don't seem to get very far every time I try. Maybe what I need is a good kick in the butt to get me working. I think I have the wrong attitude. When the stress builds up I don't crack up like in high school, here I get to the point where I just don't care what happens. Maybe the fact that I'm bored with two of my courses adds to that. I couldn't care less about [course 1] and [course 2] and the way I see it that's the wrong attitude. [133F/D NV07].

This level of effort, while it may (or may not) produce academic results, also exacts a heavy psychological and physical price, including anxiety, tension, exhaustion, and ultimately burnout.

[Name 1, name 2, name 3] and I went down to the Stone Road Mall. I picked up my glasses - busy is when you have to go almost blind for two weeks because you don't have the time to pick up glasses. [151M/D NV10].

I felt so wiped out after the whole day that I was not in a very good mood. Wanted to be by myself but of course my Mom and Dad wanted to be with me. Finally, felt so frustrated that I left the room, went to my bedroom and cried and cried so hard FOR NO REASON!! I couldn't believe how much I was crying. I figured out later that it must have been my tiredness (didn't get to sleep until 3 AM Thurs[day] and had an 8 AM class) and all the release of my tension from the anxiety of having a midterm [exam]. [169F/D OC07].

The work, the workload. That's my main concern. It's how much time to spend on what and will I have time to do everything. What am I going to do when mid-terms roll around. And things like that. Like watching the schedule and things like that. That's a big worry. I can really see myself just burning myself out, like every night this week I'm staying up 'til twelve o'clock doing homework. Right after dinner up until then, just go straight through. And in the afternoons I have classes and plus I've got other activities. [119F/D SE15].

I did slack off a bit there because I guess they call it burnout. I just had so much that I didn't want to do anymore and I got to the point where I just backed off for a week or so.

I am about two weeks behind in my reading which is my own fault which just shows keep up with everything and you'll be OK, save yourself a lot of stress. [101F/I DE04].

The only thing which I can really tell changed was my feelings about going back to Guelph. For some reason I was not excited or even happy about it. That weekend I felt back at home; Guelph is not my home. Maybe it was just trying to face all that work! [116M/D OC02].

Such experience must be seen, first, in the context of the initial idealism which characterized study subjects and, second, their growing realization - indeed insistence - that there was more to university life than academic work; the price associated with that insight will be the subject of a later section (see below, Theme 11).

When I first started out I was very religious about doing everything every night and that sort of thing. That sort of fell behind a bit! As the year went on, as I started doing other things in the evening. Like spending my time on other subjects. Well, a couple of times I went down to Waterloo [University] or to Western [University] for the week-end, and that sort of shot the week-end. I did, before the exams started, before that last week, I got caught up in everything. So I did get all my work done. I did that, the week-end of the third and fourth, I spent 19 hours solid working! Between those two days. About thirty pages of [course 1] and about seventy pages of [course 2], to get caught up in that. It was a lot more concentrated than it should have been. But I got it done. [113F/I DE16].

I feel like I'm always behind. I know everyone says they are, I just feel like no matter how much I do I can't get caught up. It kinda scares me a little bit, because I don't know how prepared I'll be for the finals; but everyone says they are; you can't just stay in your room and study all through university. You have to have a life too. [169F/I SE15].

I got up again just before 9:00 AM, figuring I could study for 2 hours before my exam. I didn't go to [course] class at 9:00 [AM] because I needed the extra hour to study. Somehow though I kept falling asleep over my books no matter how hard I tried not to. I finally fully woke up about 10:30 [AM], when it was almost too late to study! I read my brains out for 20 minutes, then gave [boyfriend] a call to tell him I'll call him Thursday, not Wednesday and I'm sorry, and he wished me luck and away I went to my exam. [144F/D OC25].

Around 9:30 [PM], [name] came by for about an hour. We talked about classes (and the [expletive] work involved!). I think we're both sort of going, "Oh, shit! How can I manage all this and still be a semi-social creature?" To help matters in this area, I was talked into signing up for intramural [sport] (what am I doing?). [113F/D SE12].

In light of such experience, the following subject came to this conclusion:

I've come up with a lot of things I want to do next term. I've learned so much about how to survive at university this term that I don't really mind if my marks go down a bit, I learned to keep up in assignments and the like at all costs, to start [course] modules early, [and] that I need to eat more fruit and vegetables (thanks Mom!). [113F/D DE10]. [Subject went from an 'A' in high school to a 'C' at the end of semester 1.]

While probably apt for her, the generalizability of this advice is limited since it fails to take account of variation across entering freshmen, either in their ability to cope with the workload or their willingness to sacrifice grades in return for greater **balance** between work and social life (see below, **Theme 10**).

Theme 8: Semester System. A complementary aspect of the workload concerns the fact that the curriculum at the university is organized within the **semester system**. This means that (most) entering freshmen take five courses each of which extends over 13 weeks. Weekly, this accounts for 15-20 hours of regular class time, labs and seminars. Additional demands are associated with mid-term and final exams, with specific courses also requiring some combination of labs, seminars, exercise modules, experiments, essay assignments and the like.¹³ The result, as the following comments suggest, was an extremely full schedule and one in which any failure to attend to on-going course work - including any unanticipated disruptions, for example, due to illness - made it very difficult to catch up.

This semester it's been a rush, these last two weeks have been a rush trying to get everything done because other things got in the way. Like [course 1], this project has to be done, small projects have to be done every week. And [course 2], there's assignments to be done, and [course 3] modules are kind of put to one side. But I think if the person's able to do, like one module a week, then fine. [116M/I DE01].

Do this and do this and do this and get it done. You can't have any social life if you've got something else [academic] to do. This week-end, got up 7:30 [AM] Friday morning and went to bed at 6:30 [AM] Saturday morning and slept for three hours. I wasted a lot of time, but it's really hard to [concentrate], right now. I had mid-terms last week, I had five mid-terms in two days, I just needed something to relax. Maybe next semester when I get away from all the introductory courses. But it seems like they try and cram so much in. If you have sixty pages in a chapter, there's going to be 120 or 240 different topic ideas. And if you're responsible to know all of them in one chapter, and then you're responsible for twelve chapters, and you have five subjects and you have to do the same thing. It's just sort of MIND OVERLOAD! [162F/I DE05].

¹³ In Fall, 1989, a series of supplementary questions were added to the Incoming Student Survey (n=1500). Two of these concerned the semester system. The first showed that 46% of respondents either were unaware that Guelph operated on such a system or felt it was not an important basis for their decision to apply to Guelph. The second revealed that 76% of respondents would have attended Guelph even if it did not operate on a semester system.

I am an organized person but I don't feel anywhere near organized now. Mainly, its because of everything due at once that needs all the same attention (100% of me). Oh! I hope to sleep and try to relax until [boyfriend] comes. Then he'll help me relax. Maybe that's what I need. Sleep off the stress. [156F/D OC20].

The week of November 7-11, I had 3 midterms to do, one in [course 1], one in [course 2] and one in [course 3]. Since then I've had a [course 4] computer test, a lab final in [course 2], plus I had to do a [course 5] lab and 5 modules and a major [course 3] essay. [147F/D DE01].

I don't know what to expect....Especially with going into a semester [system]. If I had gone to Ottawa or Carleton [Universities], it would have been September to April or May, whatever. So it would ahve been a little better, as far as time management goes. But here, it's like, you can't fall behind! or you're dead. I know that but can I fall this far behind and still be okay. Just things I've got to straighten out and figure out. [161F/D SE15].

Implicit in these comments are two additional features characteristic of the semester system, namely, **cumulative workload** and **chance**. The former refers to a fact true of all systems but having an especially potent impact within a semester system: each faculty member prepares their course as if none others existed. This lack of coordination means that, across the body of freshmen, the cumulative workload involved in five courses is likely to vary tremendously. Among study subjects, those in the Arts program reported a low to moderate cumulative workload, those in science moderate to high and those in engineering uniformly high.¹⁴

As to the latter, chance, this refers to another fact, namely, that there is an element of chance associated with course registration. The university tries to make accessible to students the courses they most want to take. This is restricted, however, as a function of course enrollment limits. Consequently, students may be "bumped" from a given course simply because it is full and may thus be forced to accept some less desired alternate. Further, shifts in course enrollment may also take place in the weeks following registration in light of "drops and adds", students who, for a variety of reasons, decided to drop a course and add another in its place. The upshot of these processes is to introduce considerable **variation** into course selection which, in turn, makes the cumulative worload difficult - if not impossible - to predict in advance.

These sources of workload variation, coupled with pressures associated with the semester system, suggest an interpretation of a previously reported finding (see above, **Theme 6**), namely, that first semester

¹⁴ Unfortunately, subject diaries were insufficiently systematic to permit time budget analysis.

grades are a better predictor of second semester grades than high school leaving grades. In light of the above comments, the low level of grade variation between semesters 1 and 2 may mean **two** things: first, the workload pressures associated with the semester system may, in part, account for grade reduction; and, second, once a semester 1 grade average is established, those same pressures may **lock in** students at that level, making it very difficult for them to raise their grade average in semester 2.

Theme 9: Academic Success. An added facet of student's drive to achieve is the need to cope with the **evaluation process** itself as well as its necessary biproduct, **course grades**. In both respects, study subjects had much to say.

Turning first to the evaluation process, there was consensus among subjects that **exams** were emotionally and physically draining.

Got up [from exam]. Physically and emotionally I feel like I've been in a car crash. [151M/D NV09].

I was so tired this morning that I had to drag myself out of bed.... This afternoon I had my [course] midterm. It was scary. It was not a particularly hard test, but we were in a big lecture hall and people were getting kicked out for cheating left, right and centre. I wasn't cheating, but I was afraid that someone would think I was and they would take my test away. Despite this, I think I did well. After all of my classes were done, I came home and nearly collapsed on my bed. I was physically and mentally drained. [119F/D OC05].

We started the exam. It was very long and I found it hard. There were a couple of questions that I couldn't answer. Afterwards I felt relieved that it was over but I also felt completely drained. [147F/D OC27].

Perhaps even more significant than test taking per se was what was absent from these and other comments, namely, that the testing procedure was in some way useful or contributed to their understanding of the topic at hand. What emerged instead was a portrait of examinations as essentially **mechanical** in nature; they were simply accepted as part of the **grading system** and they served the needs of that system, but they returned nothing of any personal or substantive value to the students themselves.

This said, it is **not** to suggest that the product of the evaluation procedure, the resulting **grades**, were of no importance. Quite the contrary, as the central currency of the university system (Becker et al., 1968), grades are the **only** thing which makes all the effort involved worthwhile. Accordingly, study subjects

tended to evaluate themselves, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of significant others, in terms of their grades.

Don't like doing poorly! I like to do well and be proud of myself and make others proud of me. [105F/D OC03].

I went to write module 5. I was sure I had done OK. I failed it again. Now I am upset and depressed. [134F/D OC11].

I headed for [course 1]. In class I sat with [name] and [name], a girl I met at Campus Crusade. It was extremely difficult to keep my eyes open. I almost didn't go to [course 2] because I had a headache and I wasn't sure I'd be able to stay awake. But I went anyway, and good thing I did because I got my essay back, and was I surprised - astonished even - to receive an 85%! Very nice! I expected about 45%. [144F/D OC03].

And I worked my butt off on this and I got 92%!! I couldn't believe it!! I walked out of there and I almost did a cartwheel, I was so happy! And I called my mom and I told her, and I talked to my dad about tuition money, and he said, "Oh, well, we'll dream up something." I said, "No, you don't dream up something, I need the money!" [112F/I DE01].

Have my computer test for [course] and I pass. In high school I would have been devastated by 65% but now I'm thrilled, probably because I've heard that most people failed it. [123F/D OC04].

I got my [course 1] mid-term back today. 62%. The mark made me pretty disappointed. I studied so hard and I only got a mediocre mark. I have a [course 2] mid-term next Monday which I am going to study so hard for. That was the only thing I got back today, and I was happy. I have lost all confidence in the other mid-terms I had. [119F/D OC11].

Given that student diaries were only maintained for eight weeks, it is unclear what specific impact poor grades have on subsequent academic efforts. In general terms, however, most students elected to continue their academic work. A minority did more than this, striving to improve **both** their chances of success and their program satisfaction, either by changing programs (if permitted) or dropping difficult or boring courses.

I chose agriculture because I wanted to have something to do with animals and I thought [program] would be good. And I was talking to my [high school] guidance counsellor and he said the cut off was a lot lower which guarantees me to get in but I had the mark to get into [course], and probably would have gotten me into it too. And then I got the course, and I thought, "this is an alright course." Then it got more and more boring and it wasn't at all what I wanted, I'm not interested in it at all. And I tried to get out and I don't know if I can do it. They ask for an average and I think it's 68 and, if you don't have it, you can't switch, I just hope I have it. [133F/I DE14].

Anyway, I think I'll probably switch into the [program] because although I don't know the specifics of what I want to do, I'm almost certain that I want it to deal with [subject].

Nothing I've been exposed to has really "turned my crank" (to quote [friend]) so fast and so definitely as [subject] has. [113F/D OC01].

Wrote [course] exam. Didn't do too good - 60% - thinking of dropping course. Takes too much of my time and don't have time for other classes homework. They're more important than this one. [159F/F OC06]. Dropped my [course] today. That felt like a load off my shoulders [159F/D OC06].

Examinations, then, appear as part of the overall workload, often contributing, in general, to the stressful character of the first semester, and, in particular, to already well advanced student fatigue and anxiety. Universally accepted by students as a necessary evil, their successful completion was seen as essential to academic advancement but, by omission, were not regarded as contributing anything of intrinsic value to students themselves. Much the same was true of grades, however their status was rather more complex. As the only significant means of earning rewards in an educational system organized around the **grading system**, grades were often seen by subjects as a true measure of their self-worth. Given the fact that most subjects experienced a decline in grades (see above, **Theme 6**), this helps explain their generally shaky intellectual self-confidence (see above, **Theme 4**).

While correct, this formulation is also incomplete, for it implies that freshman students tend to be passively compliant, simply working hard, doing their best on exams and other evaluation procedures, and hoping to do well. While this does indeed characterize some students, it by no means includes them all. Rather, a sizable minority were quite prepared to take more **positive action** to influence the course of their academic career in general and their course grades in particular. Two such strategies were noted above, transferring programs and dropping course; other, more subtle approaches, are the focus of the next theme.

Theme 10: Hidden Curriculum. Discussion of workload, the semester system and academic success is necessarily based on a series of assumptions, such as the following:

1. All rules and standards necessary to academic success are **known** and **explicit**.
2. All faculty members apply these rules and standards **uniformly**.
3. All freshmen are **equally aware** of these rules and standards.

4. All freshmen are equally likely to **adhere** to these rules and standards in striving for academic success.

The seminal work of Becker et al. (1961, 1968) at the University of Kansas - since replicated in Canada, at the University of Calgary (Meyers, 1979) and in Great Britain, at the University of York (Lewis, 1984)¹⁵ - suggests that virtually all of these assumptions are **false**.¹⁶ Based on participant observation, this work yielded a complex formulation not amenable to easy summarization. Nevertheless, at the risk of oversimplification, the following would appear to capture the key points:

1. All faculty members **value** student learning and **aim** to support and encourage student scholarship, love of learning, and independent study.
2. Faculty behavior, in contrast, conveys to students the superordinate importance of **grades**.
3. Moreover, the rules and standards faculty members employ in the distribution of grades are not only **highly variable**, but are perceived by students as **covert**, even **mysterious**. These covert rules and standards constitute the **hidden curriculum**.
4. Consequently, much a freshman academic behavior demonstrates a preoccupation with **getting good grades** in general, and, in particular, **discovering** and **manipulating** these covert rules and standards.
5. Faculty members and freshman students also differ in another way: whereas the latter tend to think of students exclusively in academic terms, the latter tend to employ a more complex definition of a **mature student**, that is, one who achieves some balance between the academic and the social.
6. The ultimate consequence of the **hidden curriculum** is that it defeats the purpose of higher education, mechanically substituting the **acquisition of grades** in place of **genuine learning**.

The present study was not designed to replicate this work,¹⁷ nor did subject reports address all of the above points. However, subjects comments were **consistent** with the above formulation across a range

¹⁵ Similar or related results are also reported by Bernstein (1972) and Hall and Carlton (1977). For a relevant review, see Pike (1981).

¹⁶ Originally intended to explore **three** areas of student life - personal relations, campus organization and politics, and academic work, data with respect to only the last area were ever published.

¹⁷ However, it does share with Becker et al. (1968) a concern with **"what [freshman] student do"** as opposed to what they say they do in surveys and other self-report measures typical in the freshman literature.

of observations. Above (see **Theme 8**), two such strategies have already been identified: program transfer and dropping courses. Subject comments identify at least **nine** additional examples.

First, student subjects perceived that the manner in which essays or exams were marked could be arbitrary, sometimes with positive results, other times with negative results.

It's [course], so there's a lot of quizzes and labs and things like that, that take the balance off the final. And I was just worried because I'd never had that before where I walk out of there thinking, I felt really good, this is at least a 75[%], 80[%], and then I got a 62[%]! And my girl friend who I studied with got 81[%]! That really ticked me off, we studied the same amount, the same time. [112F/I DE01].

I also had a [course] midterm which I did not study right for. I just could not grasp what I studied with what the questions wanted. I hate multiple choice to begin with so I got nervous. The worst part is I actually know what is going on in that class. [126F/D OC23].

My roommate got 56% and she typed her [essay] from her head onto the typewriter for half of it. It seems like hard work and time doesn't pay off. [117F/D NV06].

Second, faculty members could behave in one way in class yet behave quite differently when seen personally, in their office.

I can manage the assignments and I understand the work. In one class I couldn't get what it was all about, and the professor seemed sort of aloof and didn't seem pleased to answer my questions in class. But when I went to see him in his office he was real friendly and pleasant and didn't seem to mind talking to me, so I'm OK with that class now. [162F/I SE26].

Third, subjects ranked courses in terms of their relative salience or level of demand. They then selected a course on which to spend extra time while (temporarily) neglecting the others.

I was bad today. I missed both [course 1] and [course 2] lectures. Was feeling pretty tired. Stayed up late last night studying [course 3]. [169F/D OC21].

In really shouldn't be here right now. I should be heading over for [course 1] but I decided that I need to study for [course 2] more than I need to sit in a useless [course 1] class. We really don't do anything -almost no notes and some pretty wild discussions. Of course, I feel tremendously guilty for missing a class but I have to break the rules sometime. [120F/D OC24].

I got up about 8 [AM] and showered etc. but I did not go to my 9 o'clock or my 11 o'clock classes because I was working on my [course] seminar. [144F/D NV01].

During [course] class today, I spent most of the time going over old notes and have fallen so far behind in trying to follow today's lecture on quantum mechanics. [101M/D NV02].

Fourth, subjects typically used the professor's response to essays and exams to discover course standards otherwise unclear or simply unknown.

I had my best class again today [sarcastically]! Ha! [Course] is really bizarre. I'm not sure if I'm going to make it through this course. I can't wait until I start handing in assignments and getting them marked. At least I'll sort of know where I stand. [161F/D SE19].

Well, the mid-term questions were fair. It's up to how the teacher marks. I know I would have gotten a 75%-80% in high school. I wonder what I'll get for it here. I predict 70%-75%. [156F/D SE30].

Fifth, in some courses, subjects concluded that the professor had covertly established an upper mark limit which no one could exceed, irrespective of their actual performance.

[Course] midterm. I was worried about how I did. It was impossible to score above 70%, even if I did everything right. Luckily, I did that and my mark was 70%. [151M/D NV03].

Sixth, subjects noted that some professors would make exceptions to the rules in response to personal appeals. In some cases, this response was one they themselves found pleasing but surprising. In other cases, such covert rules were acknowledged but the subject refused to participate.

And it was like 11 o'clock Monday night and I said, "Gee, when's your deadline?" She [roommate] goes, "12 [noon]." So she called the teacher and the teacher, I don't know how it works, but she got off really easily. She didn't get marks deducted because it was late because she called the teacher. "How can I get it to you?" And the teacher said, "Just it hand it in tomorrow." But she wasn't really done; she still had to type it. So there was this little note on it that said, "Completed at 11 PM, Monday." So there was no marks deducted. So she just made it by the skin of her teeth; she got away with it. And I said, "Nice teacher!" [112F/I DE01].

I thought [the professors would] be more bureaucratic. In my [course] class I had an assignment, it was a stupid thing, I had my [course] assignment in class but I forgot to hand it in at the end of the class, and I handed it in the next day. I put it under his door. I went to talk to him the next day, and he just accepted it without any questions or lecturing me; he just said, "Oh, that happens, you did get it in, there's no problem." I was really pleased with that, I was impressed with that. [101M/I SE28].

I don't have the time or energy to waste on either flattering the professor or writing something incredibly eloquent, so I'll settle for 70%. [130M/I JA10/89].

Seventh, subjects distinguished different course categories based on the rules for gaining marks, with some classified as requiring real understanding while others "merely" required a good memory.

Its not learning anything, you're memorizing and there is a difference. The only way you pass [course 1] is if you have a good memory. Its not that you're going to learn anything. I used to have a good short term memory and everything after the exam I'd pretty well forget, which bothered me. I'd remember a lot of stuff but I have not learned hardly period.

I have learned a lot actually but still I learned more in [course 2] because its an essay and I have an overall understanding of what I learned whereas in [course 1] I have all these names and definitions and stuff that I'm supposed to know which is a lot different than an overall understanding. [104F/I DE01].

Eighth, subjects routinely distinguished between professors in terms of both the reputed difficulty of the exams they set and/or their marking standards (ie., tough vs easy).

[Name], my [course] TA managed to scare us all about the [course] final because it is written by Dr. [...], not Dr. [...], and is supposed to be a killer. Just what I need. [120F/D OC20].

Finally, subjects noted that they engaged in some activities for no other reason than that marks were attached to them. They commented as well as on the impact such a preoccupation with marks could have on the process of "real" learning.

After [course 1] I met [name] in the U.C. at 12:00 [noon] and we spent the afternoon together - just talking as usual, and I skipped my [course 2] seminar but I'm not getting marks for it anyway so I figure I'm entitled to it! [144F/D OC11].

Have to go do another [course] research experiment. An easy way to earn [an extra] 6%. [120F/D SE26].

I have my [course] seminar after and we debate some topics. I talk alot because its for marks. [123F/D OC26].

I think you will learn the things and in retrospect you've learned it, but some of the enjoyment is taken out of it. When you get into the high pressure times. I think you're able to enjoy it more when you do have more time. I think some of the enjoyment's taken out of it, sometimes its just, "I have to do this to get the mark." whereas, if the marks weren't quite as important, you could be "I'm enjoying this." and the marks would be a measure of how much you knew the subject because you were enjoying it and you were working for the sake of it. I guess the problem is to with marks, they do have to put an emphasis on it because most people aren't going to work [otherwise]. [101M/I NV28].

These data are consistent with the view that there is a hidden curriculum at the University of Guelph. If correct, this has important implications for the academic efforts of entering freshmen. First, it suggests that freshman students are, in fact, required to master two curricula, one overt, the other covert or hidden. Second, the two curricula make very different demands and require divergent skills, the former substantive and relatively static, the latter interpersonal and situationally dynamic. Third, the two curricula encourage quite different orientations towards the world; the former, based on the scholarly pursuit of excellence and the discovery of truth, is open-ended; the latter, based on behavioral strategies directed

towards the maximization of marks, is inherently conservative. Finally, and operationally most consequential, entering freshmen will presumably distribute across both curricula; those with an aptitude in both will thus have a decided advantage over those with an aptitude in one only or, worse still, in neither. Put differently, this is to suggest that students who emerge from high school with good academic skills may still fail to do well in university, one reason being their inability to meet the requirements of the hidden curriculum.

Theme 11: Classroom Size. Discussion to date has focused on **what** students must do in order to succeed academically. A last series of themes addresses this issue in terms of **where** they work and with **whom**.

Here, the former will be addressed, specifically, in terms of classroom size. For the most part, research exploring the effects of size have largely been confined to studies of primary and secondary school students (see Weinstein, 1979). The few existing studies of undergraduate students have focused on such issues as seating position (eg., Sommer, 1967), classroom design (eg., Horowitz & Otto, 1973) and classroom size or density (eg., Schettino & Bordon, 1976; Sommer & Becker, 1971), typically with equivocal or contradictory results.

Similarly, study subjects were split on the issue of class size. Some favored small classes while others indicated that they were untroubled by large classes. Interestingly, no subject specifically preferred large classes in any positive sense; rather, such a preference rested solely on negative grounds, such as avoiding attention (#134) or freedom to come and go unnoticed (#147). While subject diaries were not rated on this variable - due to unacceptably high variability - inspection of the data indicates that roughly 65% either expressed some reservation(s) about large classes or specifically favored smaller classes. Both perspectives are represented in the following comments, beginning with an observation which illustrates how much size variation is possible across any given five courses.

No, my two [course 1 & 2] classes are between 300 when there's a test and just regular lectures about 200. My [course 3] got about 100 or less. My [course 4] started out with about 68, I think there's about 25 people left in that class and my [course 5] has about 35 people in it. So they vary. [104F/I DE01].

As regards large classes, of the minority that found them "alright", most reported habituation through time, but still either noted some reservations or took steps to shrink the size of the class psychologically.

The first couple of days, I sort of sat there. I couldn't believe there are all these people here! It's kind of strange to come to a class and sit down with more than twice your graduating class [in high school]! As the semester wore on it didn't really bother me. I generally tended to sit towards the front so I didn't really see all the masses behind me. That helps. I [also] find I'm much less likely to ask a question in a class that size than I was in high school. Now I don't know how much of that is class size only, or the bit about professors and how conducive they are to questions. I prefer smaller classes just because there is more of a chance to say, "Whoh! What's going on!" [113F/I DE16].

I have the feeling it's kind of scary to sit there with 400 other people. But you get used to it; it's OK now. As you get to know the people it's a lot better. [133F/I DE14].

My largest class is [course 1].... I didn't really mind the size, only because I was expecting some large classes... [In large classes] [v]ery few people ever volunteered to answer [questions]. Usually if anybody ever spoke up it was just to ask a question. With [course 2] too. When we did our class evaluation, [the professor] said that he wished he could have had more discussion and all that, but with a class that size it'd be impossible. But in a way, I think that's the purpose of the seminars. I did enjoy the seminars. 'Cause I got to know a few faces from that. [120F/I DE14].

But I know a lot of people feel really intimidated in the large classrooms and they just sit there [and don't ask questions]. Q: They're afraid of how they look to the prof or to the other student? To the students, they're afraid of looking stupid or else, because it is such a huge number, that they're just, "Oh, I can't speak in front of this many people!" [161F/I DE13].

Turning to small classes, study subjects were quite specific concerning the bases of their approval: the context was more conducive to learning, they were more likely to develop a genuine relationship with the professor, and they were given the opportunity to express their opinions and compare them with those of others.

Class sizes don't really bother me, it's a bit overwhelming. I usually sit in the front, but to sit in the back and see all those people in front of you! From that point of view, I really like my [course 1] seminar, it's very tiny. [113F/I SE15].

With my [course 1] class, I'll probably have a very good relationship with my teacher 'cause there's only 12 of us. I like small classes, I'm used to them. I feel very uncomfortable in large classes. There's 140 students in my [course 2] class, I don't expect much of a relationship [with the professor] there. I think with [course 2] there might be a bit of [a relationship], like, "Hi, how are you?" I don't expect any in [course 3]. There's 300 students in my [course 3] class. That's the biggest class I've ever sat in and it makes me very nervous to go in there. I feel like [the professor's] lecturing to the class and not to the individual. [139F/I SE15].

In the classes that are small, I think I learn more. Because it's kind of like that [in the] high school environment, where you're on a one-to-one with the teacher. Whereas the big classes, I have to go home and everything's on me. I don't learn much from class. I mean, sure the prof will say some good points, you watch a film here and there, but I just realize that I get more out of classes that are smaller. My [course] class is small and we're all one-to-one 'cause everyone has their chance to give their input about something. I notice that by sitting down and listening to someone else's ideas, it was interesting, I learned someone's else's view rather than just having my own view. Because in a big class I only have my view, I don't know anyone else's view. [156F/I DE01].

My [program] professors, you get closer to them; they let you talk to them on a first name basis, because of having a small class, and that's part of the privilege of being in that group, the advantage. I've been pretty impressed [with] my [course] professor; being in the big class, I'm glad to have somebody like that... I'm lucky to have only the one large class and I've got a really exciting professor there, really enjoyable, I really enjoy the lectures. [101M/I SE28].

The nature of these data is such that it would be unreasonable to infer that freshman students perform better academically in small classes than in large ones. However, these responses do support two alternative conclusions. First, it seems clear that while study subjects tolerated large classes, none of them were really comfortable in them. On the one hand, this was so because of the sharp **difference** between such classes and their previous high school experience. On the other hand, the structure of such high density settings was such as to require that students be largely or wholly **passive**, in some cases despite the best efforts of the professors in question. On these grounds, it would appear that large class size typically contributed to **transition stress** among freshman students in a way that small class size did not.

Second, the impact of class size appears to be mediated, at least in part, by the social character of the settings in question. The expectations and the experiences of subjects varied from one setting to the other. In large classes, subjects sought relations with peers and fully expected that such relations would evolve. In contrast, while many would have liked a relationship with faculty members, few expected this to happen; indeed, faculty members were perceived as distant, unable (however willing) to respond to students on a one-to-one basis. In large measure, student **comfort** in large classes appeared related to the **degree of congruence** between their preferences, their expectations and their actual experiences. With regard to faculty members, congruence was typically high: few students anticipated a "real" relationship and this matched their experience. With regard to peers, congruence varied. When it was high, large classes became

tolerable, both because they were shared with known others, but also because such relations allowed for psychological shrinkage: significant others were few in number and restricted to members of one's class-specific peer group. When it was low, large classes became intolerable, as a function both of sheer size as well as unanticipated social isolation.

In small classes, subject preferences were virtually identical, but their expectations and experiences were different. As regards peers, they expected that small classes would be a good place to meet people, share the class together and perhaps make friends. They were usually right about meeting and sharing; as will become apparent in a later section, making friends was rather more problematic. As regards faculty, they expected to be become known and recognized, to participate and to form a mutually supportive relationship. Again, they were usually right about recognition and participation; as will become apparent in a later section, their expectations regarding anything resembling the sort of relationship they had with teachers in high school were nearly always disappointed in university, irrespective of class size.

Theme 12: Classroom Dynamics: I. Peer Relations. That peer relations are a feature a classroom life is hardly surprising; that people should all come together in the same place and engage in the same activity on a regular basis over 13 weeks and fail to evolve some sort of relationship would be astonishing. However, this said, the **salience** and **range of impacts** of such relations remains unclear.

With regard to the former, the vast majority of student subjects indicated that such relations were not merely important, they were a **central feature** of classroom life; indeed, in some cases, it appears that such relations were the only redeeming feature of the course in question. Conversely, in the absence of such relations, even a substantively interesting course may increasingly lose its appeal.

But I am looking forward to my new classes, so that I can be around new people. Have the opportunity to meet new people. Because even the people I see all the time, the faces are familiar, but there was never any reason to meet them. There's this one lady, she came, I think she's in her late 20's, she came from [university]. She's really pretty, she was an [type] teacher, and she's getting into nutrition and she worked in this health club - all the stuff I'm interested in. I saw her all the time but [had no opportunity to meet her]. And then, last week, we were set up as partners to make ginger bread cake, so then we had the opportunity to talk. [112F/I DE01].

Met some girls in my [course 1] and [course 2] classes; [name], [name], and [name], respectively. I'm glad I'll have friends in my classes. Will help me make it through more easily, I think. [120F/D SE08].

Up bright and early at 7:00 AM. I didn't want to go to class but my conscience won out and I went. I was very tired and had great trouble paying attention. I was one of the first into my [course] class and took a "leftie" seat as usual. I felt like a leper because no one sat beside me until the other seats were all full. I guess it's just that people like to have their space, but I'm a social animal and that empty seat made me feel awfully alone. I don't mind going to class by myself, but I don't like not even speaking to the person I sit beside. It's really not natural not to talk to people. [144F/D SE19].

In my [course] lab today I was quite bored. I'm not really interested in any of the stuff we're doing, so I find myself wandering off in my own thoughts. The only good thing about this lab is that we have a chance to work in groups. I always feel more comfortable when I can discuss the material with others. I can learn a lot more this way. [133F/D NV01].

I still don't know anyone in my [course] class. It is getting a little depressing. I have no one to walk to class with, no one to sit with and no one to talk to. [162F/D SE12].

Of course, the salience of such relations made them double-edged in character: when such relations were cordial and/or supportive, class time became a pleasure one soon came to depend upon; when such relations failed to evolve, leaving one isolated and alone among strangers, class time could soon become aversive. Moreover, either possibility, once established, soon became a routine feature of the course in question. The following comments illustrate both possibilities as well as the routine character of either.

I sat with [male] (of course) and after class we went and got coffee and talked. This is becoming kind of a tradition or habit maybe. But we get along so well; I'm sure he could become habit forming! We went up to the Keg for beer again, and didn't quite make it for afternoon classes. We did get to the library, though, so I could get my articles photocopied. [144F/D OC06].

I sat beside [name] again today. I find that most people sit beside the same people in class. Each class a different person maybe but still the same. [161F/D SE20].

[Course] again at 8 [AM]. What a killer. [Male] wasn't there, he hasn't been there for the past two lectures. I'm really disappointed. It was kind of nice to have someone to talk to, although we often talked through the whole lecture. Oh, well, maybe he'll be there tomorrow. [133F/D OC05].

If I could I would drop [the course]. I don't really like it. It is very boring and today I nearly fell asleep. No one seems to be very friendly in the class unless they know you. I find it difficult to function in this kind of environment. [162F/D SE19].

I can't believe I am taking this course. But I have no choice. This class has gone downhill since the beginning of September. I'm more interested in what is in the text. The professor only explains what's in there anyhow. Most of the people near the back talk all of the time

and it takes away my interest in the course. Somehow I always end up sitting near the front. [139F/D SE21].

I met [name] this morning before going to [course]. The class was interesting but again not many people were talking to other people. It seems that cliques have formed already. No that they are as difficult to 'get into' as in high school. It's just that people have formed groups already. We've even done it sort of. [161F/D SE12].

Finally, classroom dynamics were **not** confined to those routinely present in class. Rather, such processes were often influenced by significant others with whom course students were involved, including, as in the following comments, romantic others and parents.

I'm having trouble concentrating on [academic] things. Part of it's tiredness. But most of it [girlfriend]. I can't believe we get along so well. [130M/D SE20].

I spent most of the afternoon reading. I'm still unsure what exactly it is I'm supposed to be doing. I'm not sure if I should be taking notes on what I'm doing. Also, all this confusion over [boyfriend] and [other male] makes it hard for me to concentrate on my work. [119F/D SE17].

Sat through [professor's] boring lecture. I feel lost for the first time. Ack! Too excited about going home [to parents] on Friday to concentrate. [123F/D SE27].

This morning I went to my three morning classes. It was kind of hard to concentrate because I was looking forward so much to going home [this weekend]. [119F/D OC06].

These data belie any notion that freshman students evaluate their courses in terms of substantive content alone. Rather, their evaluations are more likely to take the form of a gestalt, encompassing a wide variety of facets. It will now be apparent that one such facet concerns the extent to which class-based peer relations are supportive and pleasurable. Paradoxically, on these grounds, a given course may be rated positively despite the fact that it is otherwise regarded as substantively uninteresting, boring or irrelevant. In turn, such an evaluation may shape subject's perception of other course facets. Whether positive or negative peer relations actually influence academic performance is unclear, at least in the light of these data. That student subjects believed this to be so is in little doubt. Similarly, they often tended to perceive course satisfaction, classroom comfort, and the like, through the lens of class-based peer relations.

Theme 13: Classroom Dynamic: II. Student-Faculty Relations.

Relations between student subjects and their peers were **not** the only basis on which to account for events and processes in the classroom. The other obvious source concerned relations between students and faculty. Such relations have received considerable and on-going research attention as regards the developmental consequences of out-of-class interaction (see Pascarella & Terenzini, 1976, 1977; Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella et al., 1978; Wilson et al., 1974, 1975). Strangely, similar attention has not been accorded relational processes in classs. This contrasts sharply with student subjects who were nothing less than outspoken on the topic. These comments divide cleanly into **three** groups: those concerned with the characteristics of "good" professors; those who describe "bad" professors; and, those expressly concerned with student-faculty interaction.

With regard to "good" professors, the following are representative of subject observations on this matter.

Well a good prof is one that encourages questions. The best one for that was my [course] professor [name]. The only problem with that was that we ended up spending so much time on questions that we wound up doing about three chapters in about the last week of class! It was a tad rushed. Its always really good in that class because we always felt free to ask questions and if he didn't have the answer immediately available, he said he'd go find it, and he did. [113F/I DE16].

The good prof, as far as I'm concerned, goes through every single step that there is. He doesn't assume that you know something, say, [course], they miss a step because they think you already know it. Some people don't and I think that should be included. I think another aspect is that they spend some of their time with you. They're dedicated to what they're doing. They have to be clear on what they're saying, explaining something... There's something else as well. That they're clear on exams and tests. That's important. They have to be clear on what's going to be on the exam, what material on tests. How the semester is laid out, so that people can get organized straight away. That's important as well. [116M/I DE01].

He doesn't stand at the front of the class. He's not stuffy. If he needs a swear word to get across his point, he uses a four-letter word. He's really natural. He really knows what he's talking about.... [T]here's a lot of boring things in our textbooks, but they didn't talk about those things. They didn't expect us to know those things. [162F/I DE05].

I do feel that it's one-on-one almost. And both [female prof 1] and [female prof 2] have said, "Anytime you see me walking across campus, come talk to me." But again, both of them seem more approachable than any of the male profs, three profs are male. My [course] prof, he's great too. He explains everything so well. You ask him a question, and he's like, "OK!" And he'll explain it and that's good. [161F/I SE15].

I (very good!) had a [course] lecture from 1 to 2 [PM]. I quite like [prof]. He goes at a reasonable pace, but always makes sure we have a chance to copy everything we need down.

He also seems to have a sense of humor, which is, I think, essential in any sort of teacher. [113F/D SE10].

My professors, I don't think I know any of them really close. I'm more with the T[eaching] A[ssistant]s because in the labs it's a lot easier, they're a smaller class. They actually know your names. But I've heard of professors that do know people's names. Which I thought was pretty good too. But I can understand a prof with a class of 300, it would be pretty hard to know everyone. So with the TAs, especially in [course], I get along fabulous. [133F/I DE14].

It depends on the class size what a prof should be like because in the large class[es] you can't sit there and act like (pause) well you can act like you care in the sense that you can put 'good work', 'Merry Christmas' on your exam papers but (pause) acting like they care and not making the class so boring, I guess. Using different techniques and not just talking. It got really monotonous sometimes and if you are tired it got even more monotonous. [117F/I DE13].

Thus, a "good" professor displays some combination of **six** generic attributes: **technical expertise** (eg., pacing, use of overheads, variety in teaching methods); **knowledge** (eg., superior grasp of subject matter); **organization** (eg., order of presentation, detailed, complete); **responsiveness** (eg., encourages questions, enthusiasm); **caring** (eg., warmth, effort to convey information, informality, comfort in dealing one-on-one); and, **humor**. However, note that subjects also advance two levels of qualification. First, professors tend to vary with regard to these attributes. Many may be "high" on one attribute, "moderate" on another and "low" on still another. Thus, professors distribute on a continuum of "goodness", with only the rare professor "good" in every sense noted.

Second, whatever their particular configuration of "goodness", professors can still be constrained by contextual attributes beyond their control, with class size the most obvious example. However responsive or caring an individual professor, their ability to display these characteristics will be severely limited in large classes. Similarly, though less obvious, constraints derive from student fatigue, aptitude and experience with course subject matter, and overall workload. Consequently, student perception of professor "goodness" within a given class will vary as a function of these constraints. Concomitantly, within the same course, and in the face of stable professor behavior, some students will "love" the professor in question while others will "hate" him or her.

Given these attributes and constraints, it might reasonably be assumed that faculty "badness" is nothing more than the converse of "goodness", that is, poor expertise, no sense of humor, and so on. As the following comments suggest, this is only partly true, for "badness" includes additional attributes and constraints unique to it.

You know what one of my profs did that I hated so much? If someone asked him a question, [well], our room was split, a row here and a row there, [in] a "V" shape. He would answer to them and not to the rest of the class. So you'd think I don't have to write this down because he's talking to them and everyone else would start talking. He'd lower his voice and just talk to the person and that small area and you could barely hear what he was saying. That bothered me so much and it meant that you just sit there and you got so bored. That was a really bad fault that he had. [117F/I DE13].

My worst prof is the one that regurgitates the text book and that's a [subject] course and all he does is he literally stands there and line for line tells you what's in the text book. He also just stands on the podium so you can hardly see him, he just looks to the left side of the class and that's it. He clears his throat every 3 seconds and it drives you insane. He's very dry so that class I go to mainly to save myself an hour of studying the textbook and that's the only reason I go to that. [104F/I DE01].

I'm not doubting that he knows his material but I've had a few teachers in high school [like] that. You go and talk to them on a one-to-one basis and they can sit there and talk to you and explain everything but when faced with a class, they can't do it. They cannot convey it, they cannot teach you the material. Not that they don't know it, they just can't teach it. [161F/I SE15].

Well, it's obvious some of them don't give a shit about teaching introductory courses. They pretend, you get the feeling that they're going through the motions 'til you get up to the higher courses where they have to pay attention to you. I suppose you're not in their major so, definitely a feeling of you're not important. Not that you were necessarily important in high school, but you'd normally get one teacher to listen to you. Most of [the profs] are scientists or researchers rather than teachers and it shows. There are some that are naturally good at teaching, but there's some that you can tell would rather be doing research and don't feel comfortable lecturing. [130M/I JA08/89].

[Course 2]. I was really restless because I was feeling bored after [course 1] class. I was really tired and really hungry (hadn't eaten anything since 8:00 AM). Class went by very slowly; it just dragged along. [Course 3]. The instructor, [name], is a really nice guy. I think that this must be his first year teaching because he's not a good lecturer. He talks during the entire class and he doesn't stop to ask the class their opinion about a [topic], etc. He's probably afraid that no one would answer. His class is really boring, but he's very young (about 24 or 25) and very good looking, so I don't mind the class at all. [147F/D SE14].

Unfortunately today was the last time we had Dr. [name 1] for [course] because next week [name 2] will be back.... [Roommate] and I feel like we have just had a taste of how good [course] class could be and now we have to go back to hell class with [name 2]. [147F/D OC15].

The [course 1] lecture nearly put me to sleep so I decided to skip my [course 2] (or as we lovingly call it, "Gag and snooze") lecture. [133F/D OC24].

My [course] lab was a horror again today. The TA was yelling at us, calling us stupid, so one girl just started yelling back. Then the student started to cry and everyone felt uncomfortable. [119F/D SE16].

[Course] was kind of dull.... The class is in a huge lecture room in the [name] building and you could tell that everyone was getting bored (coughing, rustling paper, squeaky chairs, etc.). I always find this annoying. I sit near the front (about 4 or 5 row back) but I find I miss the occasional point by the other distractions in the room. [120F/D SE14].

I pretty well understood [course 1] this morning. [Course 2] is boring, after, because we have a substitute. He talks to us like 8-year olds. [123F/D OC25].

I skipped my [course] lecture I am ashamed to write. I realized it would take me twice as long to cover the material by myself but I do not like the prof. I am not planning to skip many lectures but I also feel it is a waste of time to go to them. [143F/D SE14].

[Course] was confusing. The teacher seems to have problems focusing his attention on one issue at a time and especially in voicing his opinion. He knows what he means, but we don't. He can't spit it out. He'll start to say something and then stop, say, "That's a bad example," start something else, say it again, start a third time and stop, and so on. His attention wanders too. That's difficult to explain but he does it. The general effect is to frustrate the students no end. We sit in our seats, either wanting to fall asleep or wanting to get up, grab him by his lapels and shake him until he says what he means (or answers our questions!). [144F/D SE12].

As noted previously, much of what makes for faculty "badness" is simply the converse of the attributes of "goodness". Much of what stands out in the preceding examples can be attributed simply to lack of technical expertise, including bad pacing, poor use of overheads, poor voice control, and the like. Lack of responsiveness and weak organization are also noteworthy.

However, **three** additional generic attributes of "badness" also emerge, including **disrespect** (eg., name calling, disinterest), **favoritism** (eg., attention to certain segments of the class or to certain persons in class), and **personal mannerisms** (eg., behaviors which, while involuntary, tend to interfere with student attention or involvement). Similarly, these attributes are affected by a variety of contextual constraints, including: student behavior which operates as a distraction, and thus further undermines a professors teaching efforts; superior substitutes which cast a professor in a bad light by contrast; student lack of attendance ("skipping") and its effect on student and faculty moral; a "feedforward" effect in which student's experience of a "bad" professor adversely affects their perception of the professor in the next class; the tendency of university's to

reward research more than teaching, with adverse consequences for the performance of professors at the introductory level; and the tendency for faculty performance to vary significantly between classroom and office, "good" in one, "bad" in the other.

Such observations serve to elaborate on the notion of a distribution of professors on a "goodness" continuum. According to this view, few professors are wholly "good"; rather, they distribute from "good" to "bad" in a more or less (statistically) **normal** curve. The preceding comments suggest **two** qualifications. First, neither "goodness" nor "badness" should be treated as dichotomous concepts. Rather, most professors will exhibit some combination of attributes which typically place them somewhere around the middle of a "goodness"- "badness" distribution. Especially important here is the need to place student evaluations in context. A student who has just come from a "bad" lecture or a very "good" one, who is hungry, tired and has little sympathy for the subject matter, is unlikely to be an especially fair judge of faculty expertise. Conversely, precisely such responses make up part of the reality of the teaching task at the university level, and such responses by some proportion of the student body may "infect" the balance of the students in the class. In this sense, the judgement of "badness" may have self-fulfilling consequences.

Second, there appears to be an important distinction between professors at the "bad" end of the continuum, and those who are judged "bad" because they display one or more of the additional attributes noted above. In the main, the former have merely to improve their technical expertise to significantly change their position on the continuum. Indeed, there is some evidence, above, that this may well be a simple function of experience. In contrast, the latter appear to have problems as **teachers** that are more serious insofar as they may be less amenable to change. What is less clear is whether (1) these problems are personal or institutional, and (2) how the faculty in question respond to feedback from students. As regards the first point, the university reward structure is again implicated. For example, it may well be, as these comments suggest, that the professors in question have a great deal of respect for higher-level students precisely because teaching them generates rewards in the research area. As regards the second point, virtually no study subject indicated that they or anyone else had ever spoken to a professor whose behavior they found problematic for any reason. On the one hand, their failure to do so may reflect their accurate

perception that it would have done little good and, vis-a-vis the hidden curriculum, might well have done them some harm. On the other hand, the classroom-office distinction suggests the reverse, that the professor's stage persona in the classroom may well be quite different than the man or woman they meet on a one-to-one basis.

Evidence regarding the first point is, unfortunately, beyond the purview of the present study. Evidence on the second point, however, is addressed by a final set of student comments which speak directly to the issue of student-professor interaction.

Went to [course] professor's office to look over exam. The professor and I had a small chat, and he is both an interesting and funny man. It's a pity that I won't get to know him better. [151M/D NV08].

My brother and all his university friends have said that [that] is really all you are, a number. So unless I had some sort of problem I needed to discuss I would feel intimidated to go up to a professor and ask him something, a question that was concerning me. But I don't think there will be some sort of relationship. Actually I think if I had a problem with a course outline I would probably discuss it in my seminars. As far as my professor goes, I don't intend to have any sort of relationship there. [118F/I SE15].

[The professor] didn't really like the fact that we had to have multiple choice exams. He said, "The way I'd like it would be if you could understand all the concepts. But since they're multiple choice exams, what you're going to have to do is go through the book and make up questions that you think would be good multiple choice items." It's more like memorizing facts, and names of things. He said he didn't like that idea, but that's how he had to do it for the course. He'd rather that we wrote essays but there was too many people. [123F/I DE07].

My early morning [course] class wasn't too bad. After class I talked to Dr. [name] about the assignment that's due tomorrow. He answered my questions quite clearly; I left his office able to answer all the questions on the assignment. [101M/D SE14].

Had [course]. [The professor] made office hours available to us. I can't wait; maybe someone will be able to make heads or tails of this big little man who hides his chalk in the curtains so no one will steal them.... He's a wicked guy with a wicked sense of humor. He speaks in a monotone voice and hardly moves his mouth when he talks. [115F/D SE26].

[Course]... I volunteered an answer but I was incorrect. Because of that, Prof. [name] kept centering me out and asking me questions. This made me nervous, since I was not 100% clear on the material, so my mind went blank. I won't volunteer an answer so quickly again. [134F/D OC25].

The only incident to speak of was in [course] class. One girl always sits in the back row, puts on a tape recorder and falls asleep. The teacher saw her and asked loudly if she was awake. The girl didn't move, so the prof just kept on with her lecture. The prof was annoyed by this, which scared me. She had every right to be annoyed, but I thought she might take it out on us. I wanted to ask a few questions at the end of the class, but she was

angry and the first person to leave. This made me resent the sleeping girl for not letting me talk to the prof. [119F/D SE21].

I guess [professors are] more personable than you think they will be. I guess you think of them more being these great high superior beings and you get here and [well] I was really taken aback when two of my [course] profs said we could call her [by her first name] if we wanted to, that really took me by surprise. And then my [course], he's not even a professor, he's part way to being dissertated or something like that. But he said, "so you don't call me doctor, and don't call me professor, I answer to [first name] but Your Lordship is fine!" [120F/I SE15].

These comments set out clearly the horns of the dilemma in which students find themselves in responding to their own evaluations of faculty "badness". On the one hand, most subjects did not expect to have any sort of relationship with their professors. Furthermore, their classroom experience, especially in large classrooms, would not infrequently present them with examples of faculty behavior suggesting either that such a relationship was undesirable or that any effort on the student's part to develop one would likely end in rejection. On the other hand, when, out of necessity, subjects did meet with professors on a one-to-one basis, they were typically surprised - even astonished - to find them cordial, welcoming and actually helpful. Even this experience was problematic however, for it could not be generalized; variation across professors was such that cordiality and informality on the part of one professor could not reliably be used to predict similar behavior on the part of any other professor. Consequently, the possibility that one might actually do something about a "bad" professor was nowhere in evidence in either subject diaries or interviews. It also meant that the level of student-professor contact, whether in class or outside of it and with "good" or "bad" professors, was uniformly low across all subjects,¹⁸ and what contact did occur was confined to academic problems and issues.

If, as seems reasonable, the developmental influence of the faculty on freshman students is directly proportional to the frequency, duration, and quality of faculty-student contact, then evidence from the

¹⁸ This inference is consistent with the recent findings of Gilbert (1988) at the University of Guelph. As part of a longitudinal study of student attrition, a sample of freshmen were asked how much time they expected to spend in contact with faculty. A year later, the same group were asked about their actual experience in interaction with faculty. The results showed that a significant proportion of respondents expected to spend a good deal of time with faculty; almost none actually did so.

present section suggests, first, that such influence was generally low, and, second, that the likelihood of influence was highest within three settings: the small classroom, the seminar group¹⁹ or the faculty office.

Discussion

Results within the academic subdomain make absolutely plain that the academic performance of entering freshmen was no simple matter, neither as a function of personality, academic aptitude or indeed any other single dimension. Rather, it was multiply determined out of the configuration of a range of variables.

In this regard, subject comments distinguish between variables at two distinct levels of abstraction: macro and micro. The former refer to variables whose effects appears global in character. These include: transition stress; the discrepancy between preferences, expectations and experience, which I have called difference; the workload; the semester system; and, the feedback consequences of actual performance. None of these variables operated alone; rather, they tended to form a feedback loop, each interacting with the others and either mitigating or exacerbating their effects. Transition stress, based on difference, tended to be exacerbated by a high workload. The effects of the latter were, in turn, potentiated by the characteristics of the semester system. Finally, when bowing to the combined pressure of these variables grades fell, this, in turn, appeared to set in a motion a self-fulfilling process, lowering self-expectations and thus performance. Still further, lowered grades within the context of the semester system appeared to make grade increments difficult to achieve, and so freshman students were locked in to whatever grade they ended up with at the end of semester 1.

The latter, the micro-level, refers to variables whose operation involves specific effects directed at specific individuals and arising out of specific others and/or settings. These include: the hidden curriculum; classroom size; and, classroom dynamics, both with respect to peers and faculty members. Again, these

¹⁹ As a function of class size, the influence within the seminar group might just as easily flow from TAs as from faculty.

variables were linked together in the form of a loop. Both singularly and collectively, these variables operated as sources of variation. In turn, the direction of that variation mitigated or exacerbated their combined effects, and interacted in the same way with their macro-level counterparts. For example, students sensitivity to the vagaries of the hidden curriculum could mitigate some of the more onerous effects of workload. Similarly, transition stress was lower for freshmen in small as opposed to large classrooms insofar as they were **less different** than their high school experience. This was also true because small as opposed to large classrooms afforded more opportunity to develop supportive peer relations. Finally, despite variations across faculty members on the continuum of "goodness"-**"badness"**, positive student-faculty contact was invariably more likely - although still not assured - in small rather than large settings.

These micro-level processes, while not specifically linked to academic performance, did show a strong association to student comfort, satisfaction and enthusiasm. In turn, these outcomes appeared to mitigate corresponding macro-level processes. Thus, peer support, for example, could mitigate the effects of workload pressure, while access to the hidden curriculum could slow the self-fulfilling consequences of lowered grades. Note that the use of the qualifier "could" in the preceding is intended to suggest a probabilistic relationship between micro and macro processes, for the two appear to be **loosely coupled**.

This seems the result of their divergent structural characteristics. Macro-level processes are both highly structured and nearly invariant. The requirement that freshman students take five courses within a semester system represents the way in which the freshman year is organized from above; it is not subject to debate or negotiation. In contrast, micro-level variables are uniformly characterized by **variability**. The salience of the hidden curriculum varies across faculty members, as does their position on the "goodness"-**"badness"** continuum. Neither can class size guarantee the availability of a supportive peer group. The combined result is that while some things about the first semester were sure - academically, it is difficult and highly stressful, with a lowered grade average the norm - the extent to which it was simultaneously comfortable or satisfying varied tremendously across the student population, and so could not be predicted in advance. Theoretically, the result is the beginnings of a **value-added model** of academic performance in

which the effects of macro variables are typically mediated by micro variables which change the "value" of the former while "adding" their own independent effects.

Domain 2: INTERPERSONAL

The INTERPERSONAL domain divides into three subdomains concerned, respectively, with social relations with **friends**, **romantic partners** (boyfriends or girlfriends), and **family members**.

Subdomain: FRIENDS

Theme 14: Salience of Friends. In our culture, friendship is ubiquitous, and probably indispensable, yet, as Rubin (1985) notes, there are no standard institutional forms, and thus no well defined norms of behavior or reciprocal rights and obligations. Consequently, while friendship is typically thought to connote such qualities as trust, honesty, and support, for any given individual the likelihood that those they label as "friends" will accept this definition is highly variable (Rubin, 1985). Indeed, even those who are demonstrably friendless are still likely to claim some friends (Reisman & Shorr, 1978).

Such variability notwithstanding, the attraction of friends is probably because they fill so many needs. These include (Duck, 1983; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969): a sense of belonging; emotional support; practical assistance; emotional integration and stability; self-disclosure; and, the development of interpersonal skills.

Within this context, there is virtual consensus in the higher education literature that friends are extremely important to undergraduates in general and freshmen in particular (eg., Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 1983; Komarovsky, 1985; Nossen, 1980; Weidman, 1988). In this regard, the early literature (see Feldman & Newcomb, 1969) focused on the initial tendency of freshmen to be indiscriminate in the formation of a large number of superficial relationship (Coelho et al., 1963); only after their security needs are met do they become more discerning and selective (Wheeler, 1966). There is also some distinction between degrees of friendship, with Wallace (1966), for example, noting the difference between inner "circle

friends" and others (see Pace, 1964). More recent research has focused primarily on four aspects of friendship: the processes associated with its formation and maintenance (eg., Duck & Gilmour, 1981; Finney, 1979; Parham & Tinsley, 1980); its temporal course (eg., Fischer, 1981); gender differences (eg., Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Miell et al., 1979; Stokes et al., 1980); and, its effects, especially as regards social support (eg., Ganellian & Blaney, 1984; Goldstein, 1979, 1980; Schill et al., 1980).²⁰

In exploring the experience of friendship relationships among study subjects, most of the same issues will be dealt with, although some variations important to them have only received cursory attention in the literature. A case in point is represented by the salience subjects attached to the friends they had or made at the university. This contrasts with the literature cited above not so much in substance as in conveying a sense of affective urgency, as in the following comments.

I don't have a roommate yet. I'm very disappointed. I would have liked to have someone to share all my experiences from the beginning. [133F/D SE05].

I'm really glad I have a lot of friends here and I'm making new ones almost every day. I feel so comfortable here and I'm not really worried about fitting in any more. I like the way I am now and I guess the people I meet do too. I hope so anyway. [120F/D SE13].

It's so different here. You have to organize your own time. I find it really hard to organize. I'm physically tired most of the time because I'm trying to do too much. There is no way I'm going to be able to stay sane. My classes average 150-200 students. My [course] class is about 300 students. The people are really nice and there is someone I know and sit with in every class. It makes me feel like I really belong at Guelph. Friends are probably the most important thing at Guelph. [139F/D SE18].

There is a lot of free time on your hands which you can spend studying. I thought I'd spend it studying but I'm not really spending too much time on studying. Which I'm trying to change. I'm spending a lot of time just making friends. Maybe that's what first semester's all about. Just getting to know everything and making friends. [133F/I DE14].

Tonight, [name], [name], [name], [name], [name] and I went to the Boo Bar again. I learned how to play snooker. Later they went to the Keg (I didn't get in). Even so, I felt more like part of a group; more like I belonged than ever before - and I've only been here for two weeks. [151M/D SE20].

[Subject] was immensely relieved to discover that a) she hadn't just been 'dropped' by this friend and b) someone else felt the same as she did. "I wasn't the only person in the place with no one to talk to and finding out that I was inadequate to the academic demands of my course [name]." Sharing fears and feelings with this person enable her to put some 'pers-

²⁰ For reviews of this literature, see especially Block (1980), Bell (1981), Duck (1983), Newcomb & Wilson (1966), and Rubin (1985).

pective' into her own depression. Also, now there is someone else to talk to and share feelings with; this friendship renewed her ability to start approaching other people to make friends. Everything is so much better with friends to talk things over with. [buddy of 169F/I OC13].

These few comments make clear that friends were central to the transition process. In their absence, the sense of isolation could be overpowering, depression could set in and even one's thought became muddled and uncertain. In their presence, the sense of one's ability to cope rose appreciably, for now the experience could be shared with a group to which one belonged and by whom one was acknowledged and recognized.

This might reasonably lead to the inference that such friendships were necessarily close and intimate. While this could certainly happen, it need not, indeed frequently did not, yet without in any way diminishing the special importance of these others. Consider the following.

But I just call them friends, not close friends. Like friends I can talk to and go places with, but not the same bond as my really close friends. I could seek them out and depend on them [130M/I SE21].

I guess, [my friends and I] go out together to a bar or just go to a friend's house or a trip to Toronto or something like that. Just to spend time together. "Best friends" in a way, sometimes means people you spend time together just for the sake of spending time together, sometimes. I think, we talk about a lot of things. I'm not as open with my friends as I am with, like, my brother [and] probably my best friend, in the sense of being completely open and everything. But we do talk about a lot of things we might not talk about with other people. I guess just spending a lot of time together and somebody you kind of know is there all the time. [101M/I SE28].

Conversely, the importance accorded these relationships meant that the pain was correspondingly great when one of them let one down or disappointed one, as in the following.

[The telephone] was for me; [name], the guy I met at START, was calling... He came to [residence 1] to get me and we walked over to [residence 2]. I realized soon enough that the only thing he wanted was to get laid. I was really insulted; he made me feel like dirt. I even had to walk all the way back home by myself at 3 AM. I should have known better but I thought he was a nice guy who sincerely wanted to be my friend, and a good friend is exactly what I need right now. [147F/D OC02].

This comment also raises the specter of gender differences, especially as regards the purposes of friendship. The literature is quite consistent in this regard (eg., Rubin, 1985): in both friendship and romantic relationships, females tend to be more open and self-disclosing than males, with relations based more

in talk than in action. This notion will be elaborated more fully in later sections, although even here the bare outlines of such differences can be discerned. More explicit, however, was the clear distinction subjects made between their same- and opposite-sex friendship relationships.

[Name], a friend of a guy down the [residence] hall, has asked me to go to lunch. He's a pretty good looking guy, and so far doesn't seem to be too bad of a guy personality-wise. I miss my guy buddies [from] back home, so [name] provides that buddy buddy connection with boys that I really need. It's like someone who you can talk to, but with [that] built in bodyguard, big brother features. I feel safe with him, number one that he would protect me from creeps, and number two, that he is well aware of [my boyfriend] but is still there as a friend. [112F/D SE22].

I have a few male friends, not boyfriends. I have more female friends than I do male friends. But the male friends that I have, I find they are different but I still find that I can talk to them about everything. Two of my really good male friends were past boyfriends and I find actually I can talk to them about anything, but it is different. I don't consider myself as being really a fake but in a way I do put up more of a front, I am not as relaxed I guess in front of males as I am in front of females.... Probably because the relationship between males and females I think of more on sexual terms. With a girl, it is different; I feel as an equal. But with a male I feel like we are two different people and feel there is some form of sexual relationship there, whether they be friends or boyfriends. That is probably why. [118F/D SE15].

I'm a bit shy, and I always think of girls thinking, "She's ugly" or something. I always feel self-conscious with girls, not so much with guys. I feel a lot more at ease with them right away. I find myself talking to guys a lot easier at a situation where you're just sitting around talking about things, I find it a lot easier to just talk to guys. I have met some girls, but not very many. [133F/I SE19].

I enjoy being around girls and I find that's different than being friends with guys. It's not like they're one of the boys. You can be more open with girls sometimes, I find, if they're close friends. I get more of an enjoyment out of that, more satisfaction out of that. [101M/I SE28].

As these comment suggest, friends were not all the same; rather, they appeared to vary across a continuum of closeness, from the close to the not so close. For most subjects, this typically applied to variations amongst same-sex friends, as in "best friend" (very close), "close friend" (close) and "friend" (not so close). For a minority, it also encompassed gender. Among the latter, some felt closest to same-sex others, some to opposite-sex others, and apparently for quite similar reasons: competition versus openness. For those who preferred same-sex friends, it was only with these that they could truly be themselves, without tension or the need to 'put up a front'. For those who preferred opposite-sex friends, same-sex others were

a source of negative evaluation as well as competition, such that a tension-producing 'front' was necessary in interaction with them.

In either case, two important inferences arise. First, subject students did **not** arrive at the university as tabula rasa (clean slates); rather, they did so fully formed, including a complex array of preferences, prejudices, and prelections. Second, one area in which such preferences were in evidence concerned friendship selection. In turn, such preferences operated to dramatically shrink the population of eligible others from whom friends could be selected. The likely upshot, as will soon be apparent, was that freshman students varied considerably in the ease with which they evolved a peer network, a factor others have shown is directly related to freshman adjustment (Hays & Oxley, 1986; Komarovsky, 1985).

Theme 15: Old Friends. Among freshman students, friends came in two generic categories: the **new** friends one made for the first time on arrival at university, and those one had known previously, one's **old** friends, and who either remained at home (**old old friends**) or who accompanied one to university (**old new friends**). As noted in the introduction, preoccupation in the literature with people and events on campus has meant that most attention has gone to new friends; attention to old friends has generally been very limited (eg., Cutrona, 1982; Hays & Oxley, 1986). This omission is difficult to understand, especially insofar as the bulk of study subjects (79%) were rated as having an on-going friendship relationship with at least one old new friend.²¹ In addition, the majority (67%) were rated as having at least casual contact with at least one person first encountered during the START program.²²

²¹ As noted previously (see above, note 13), supplementary questions were added to the Incoming Student Survey at the University of Guelph in Fall, 1989. One of these concerned the presence, on campus, of one or more friends of the respondent who was also attending the University of Guelph. The results revealed that only 17% of respondents came to Guelph with no old new friends whatever. In contrast, the balance of respondents arrived with one (12%), two (14%), three (14%) or four or more (43%) old new friends. That is, 83% of respondents arrived at the university with one or more old new friends.

²² Of those so involved with a START participant, none of these relationships were rated as close; rather, they were more in the order of casual acquaintances.

Subject's comments serve to elaborate on these findings, especially as regards the meaning and consequences of both old old and old new friends. A good place to begin is with the meaning of the relationship with old friends prior to arrival at university.

[My friends and I] talk about all kinds of things. We talk about school a lot and what we want to go on to in the future, what jobs we would like to get into. We talk about boyfriends, and girlfriends in the other case, with the boys. We talk about drugs, we talk about drinking, sex, anything. You name it. We concentrate lately on school, what's going to happen, how we're going to fit in. Actually I was talking a lot about how it's going to change with my boyfriends and me. [133F/I SE19].

From the time we started Grade 9 by the time we finished Grade 13. The friends that you still have in Grade 13, you've been through a lot. You've been through five years, and you [have] sort of filtered out the ones who don't mean as much to you, but the ones you still have, they're the ones who are really important. My one good friend, she going to [university]. We're really good friends, I don't want to lose touch with her. [120F/I SE15].

I basically ... could just sit down with people and just talk to them about anything and everything. That's basically what my friends and I did most of the time, we'd go out, or if we were at somebody's house, we'd just talk. That's my idea of a really good time. And I was expecting it, that everybody here, that's all that they would want to do, and [with the drinking] you don't remember anything the next morning, so it sort of defeats the whole purpose... I didn't want to get caught up in that. [161F/I SE15].

Thus, old friends were people subjects knew intimately and who were known by them in the same way. This was symbolized by a certain quality of 'talk', talk that was not only wide ranging but deeply informed by mutual knowledge, so that subjects were free to be truly themselves. Both the intimacy and the talk were important for three reasons: as will shortly become apparent, they contrast sharply with the quality of the relationship between subjects and their new friends; they call attention to a gender based difference, for such talk was characteristic of relations between females, not between males; and, it helps us understand the context of on-going relations with both old old friends back home, and new old friends at the university. The following comments first address the former group, the old old friends.

My relationships with my closest friends [back home] have changed. A lot of my friends that I saw mostly while at school last year, are going to different universities so I don't see them. When I do go home on weekends I will talk to a few of my friends on the phone but I can see that we're headed in different directions. [147F/D DE11].

I found that that [for] alot of my friends [back home] the idea of our group splitting up and not being as close as before, that bothered a lot of them. I just sort of took the attitude that we're going away, we're all going to be meeting new people, when we see each other again, we're still going to be friends. We spent a lot of time together and nothing's going

to take that away from us. But we're probably not going to be as close as we were before. And that's life. [113F/I SE15].

Some of my [old] friends are going to other universities and that'll probably be 'all she wrote' for them, 'til summer anyway. Some of my friends are still in high school. These are my closest friends and I worry about how our friendship will hold up. Even if they get a little distant I know that next summer we'll hook back up for a great summer. [130M/D SE04].

Some subjects, then, expected that the transition to university would mean a major restructuring of their former peer network, with many old old friends dropping by the wayside. **That** this should be so was clear in the comments above. **Why** this should be so is addressed in the comments below.

At home. I call [my] old friends, but we don't go out together as often [as we used to]. Even when I go home on weekends, a lot of the times I just want to stay home, so I don't call them very often. But I do call them, from [the university] though. Next semester will change [things] a bit. Because people say that they want to come up [here]. It's so hard for me to explain, "Well, we did this" and they haven't seen the campus. It's hard for them to imagine it. [133F/I DE14].

Other ones though, the people that I grew up with, a lot of them seemed to ignore you, like you're not in my life any more and [they] wouldn't talk to me and a lot of people said that I've really changed since [going away to] university, [including] my appearance. I found that kind of strange and they just didn't know how to approach me because they thought maybe my whole attitude towards life had changed! I was really surprised. A lot of people just totally ignored me and I don't know why but they did. [104F/I DE01].

[Seeing my old friends again] was weird. I went back and I found [them]. It was nice to see people again, it was an experience. I found a lot of people you see you realize that you're already growing apart. Like you say, "Hi, how's school?" You don't have that much to talk about. Because all that common ground you had in high school is gone, you still have the common experience of being at university, but all the common experiences you had while you were in high school [together] are going [ie., fading away]. [101M/I NV28].

What these subjects are talking about is embodied in the notion of **context markers**. A ecosystemic concept (see Benjamin, 1982), it refers to the minutiae which collectively serve to characterize the physical, affective and relational contexts in which all of us live. Such markers make up a substantial proportion of the "talk" in all dyadic relationships. From the "outside", it is typically **seen** as mundane and boring, while it is **experienced** from the "inside" as vital and important. Both judgements are correct, as talk of context markers is one of several key elements in the construction of a shared meaning system **within** the dyad. In turn, the extent of such sharing will, in part, determine the degree to which the partners judge their mutual relationship as "close" or "distant". In the case of many study subjects, including those cited above, going

away to university meant that they shared fewer and fewer context markers. In turn, this signaled the gradual erosion of their shared meaning system and, with it, the deterioration (perhaps unto death) of their relationship.

While the majority of subjects accepted as inevitable the loss of some or all of their old old friends, it was not a view shared by all, some of whom continued to work hard to maintain their relationship with their most important old old friends, especially during periods of stress for either party.

There was one evening, just one, when I'd gone up to a party but everyone was drunk and passing out, so I went, like, back to my room because it was so boring. I was doing some, like you know, assignments, but I could hear some people in the room above mine, and they were having a real ball, and just, like for the first time (and that's the only time) I felt a bit outside. Did I ever want to hop on a plane and go to Australia [the home of a best friend] then. But that's just dreaming. So anyway I called my friends in [Ontario city] AND at [university] and we had a real long talk and I felt okay. [162F/I SE26].

At about 3:00 [AM], my best friend [name, from home] calls, sobbing her eyes out. She says that no one in [Ontario city] cares about her, etc. I feel awful for her, but good that she called me. She feels OK after a while, and she say she's been talking to [subject's boyfriend], and that he misses me, but is in good spirits. I'm glad. [123F/D SE09].

As for old new friends, those here at the university, such relationships could be double edged. On the one hand, they could provide an invaluable source of support and instant recognition among a horde of strangers.

But I found that I didn't really need [my parents] that much. I found I relied a lot more on my friends than I did on my parents because I have my best friends here, two of my best friends are here, so I found that I could rely on them a lot more than on my parents. [169F/I DE15].

Being on the START program in the summer helped greatly. It showed me university life and a chance to meet friends who can be depended upon not only for a good time but as a backup to when things are not going too great. [116M/D SE05].

Who else did fate allow me to find at the porter's desk, but my START roommate, [name] or [nickname] for short. In short, the one person who I was closest to, I found within the first 15 minutes on campus... The best feeling was seeing my old buddy [male]. I met him in late June at a [event] and we began to talking, only to find we're both from [Ontario city]. In summary, we've become good buddies over the summer, and I felt more secure just knowing that from day one at university, there's a friend to count on. He came up behind me and hugged me that night, and he was like a kind of lifesaver in a sea of newness. [112F/D SE05].

I did go to START. That's the most beneficial thing that I've [had]. If I only had one message to anybody coming here next year, go to START. 'Cause it's phenomenal! It was fun and really informative. And when you see, even on the first day, it was really ironic,

because I was on campus for like 10 minutes and like I had to get my key at the porter's desk at [residence]. Who's standing there but my roommate from START! And isn't that a coincidence. So she helped me move in ... Just to see a familiar face. And even just in the crowds. You wouldn't remember their name, but you say, "Hey! [Colour] Group!" 'cause you were in the [colour] group together [at START]. It was phenomenal. [112F/I SE29].²³

However, on the other hand, the advantage of old new friends was also their primary drawback: time spent with old new friends meant time away from new friends. Even worse, they could actually impede the formation of new friendships, and thus limit the independence sought at university.

I met some of my [old] friends here. They don't know what they're doing. I had to explain some really basic stuff to them. I could've hung around with them but I didn't because I wanted to stay independent and force myself to meet new people. [130M/D SE04].

[Old female friend] sat with me. I think I'm getting sick of her. She always calls me and she is always there. [104F/D SE08]. The girl is getting on my nerves. I would like to meet new people but I haven't been because all she wants to do is go to her room to gab. [104F/D SE09].

Having friends on campus from her high school, rather than being a benefit, was a hindrance to making new friends. The old friends moved into new circles and she no longer felt that she had much in common with them. Because she had relied on them for companionship, she hadn't moved into new friendship circles to any great extent. She found herself isolated and left out of all the new groups around her. She had never before had problems with making new friends and had sunk into hopelessness when faced with being a "loner". That contact [she made] with a girl as distressed as herself opened doorways for her to get some new confidence and come "out of my shell". [buddy of 169F/I OC13].

Old friends, then, fall into two groups: those that remain back home (the old old friends) and those that are present at the university (the old new friends). Like many distance relationships (see below, Theme 20), relations with old old friends were at serious risk; many such relationships apparently did not survive the transition to university. While relations with old old friends could be maintained, this required considerable and sustained effort on the part of both parties.

As for old new friends, the survival of these relationships appeared to depend heavily on context. For those subjects who felt somewhat threatened by the transition to university, old new friends were a

²³ While most subjects had only good things to say about the START program, this was not universal, as in the following comment: You could tell it was fake. It'd be like, "Our group is the best!" Give me a break! It's like summer camp, that's what it was like. Like you have to do a chant about your group. And it was so stupid, like how dumb do you think we are ?! I felt we were being treated like Grade 9s more. [123F/I DE01].

lifeline, providing mutual support and assurance. For those subjects looking forward to university as providing the opportunity to make new friends, old new friends could come to be perceived as obstacles, standing in their way. Irrespective of subject's response to old new friends, however, most held on to these relationships, at least throughout the first semester.

Theme 16: New Friends.

Just as old friends come in two categories, so two sets of new friends can be distinguished: roommates and others. Each group will be examined in turn.

Roommate relations have received much attention in the literature, primarily with regard to those variables which predict roommate compatibility, with equivocal results (Benjamin, 1988b). In one sense, subject comments were consistent with this emphasis, especially as regards **similarity** as the key basis for compatibility. In another sense, however, they diverged, emphasizing, as the literature does not, how much subjects looked forward to this relationship, how badly they wanted it to work out well, and how these desires coloured their initial impressions.

[Name] is my roommate... We've spent a lot of time talking, and I found out that she has a great sense of humor, enjoys giving and receiving teasing, and shares similar attitudes to drinking, drugs, guys in the room, music, life in general, with me. I get the feeling that she's shyer than me around people she first meets and may have a bit of trouble making friends. But she's got one in me - I think we're going to get along really well! [113F/D SE06].

[Name] my new found friend, who has morals and is still a "V" [virgin], and I laid outside in the sun. It was great. We get along so well, but at first when I saw her I had this feeling I'd never get to know her. [115F/D SE26].

I was not "nervous" about being away from home by myself, which surprised me. This confidence, I guess you could call it, comes partly from the fact that my roommate is so super. [Name] is the perfect "roomie" for me. We share some common background and interests and our personalities are much alike. She makes me feel much more at ease than even some of my best friends would as roommates because she's more like me than they are. [144F/D SE05].

So far everything has been okay. My roommate, [name], just came in. She seems very nice though I don't know how much we have in common. I hope we become friends. I would hate it if I didn't or couldn't get along with my roommate. [120F/D SE06].

In a positive sense, such initial cordiality evolved out of mutual activity, especially sharing their personal life histories.

[Roommate] comes out after and tells me the story of her life - how she attempted suicide when her boyfriend died, etc. I didn't feel like much of a help since I'm so tired, but I think she's glad to discuss it. [123F/D SE26].

In a negative sense, roommate relations also evolved out of the contrast between their growing intimacy and the comparative distance between them and all others.

My roommate is the only person I know really well. Everybody else that I know from my [residence] or from my class, they're not [close], they're just people I know. [147F/I DE01].

Even so, the evolution of genuine intimacy in such relations was no easy matter. Of the total sample, 17% were, by choice or random assignment, placed in single rooms; of the remainder, only 55% of roommate pairs were rated as having a "close" relationship. Here, **dissimilarity** across a range of dimensions served either as the basis for covert distance or overt dissention.

My roommate has [a blood disorder] which is another thing which I have to work out... I was just at that crisis point where here people were throwing up and puking and passing out and here my [roommate] could die because [of her drinking combined with her blood disorder]. Like that might be extreme but you're not playing with just anything, you know. All of a sudden I got so cynical and I thought, "These are not the kind of people I want to hang out with. I've got to find different friends." I didn't even consider them friends; they were people. [115F/I SE27].

I don't think [roommate and I] will get really close but I do think we get along really well. We are, in a way, totally opposite personalities, but I give way to her differences and vice versa for her. [104F/D SE17].

[Roommate] is nice but that is about the extent of it. She is Christian and she tries to push that on me. She is always saying these things. She reads the bible before she goes to bed. She says I should try it because you don't have nightmares when you do that. She goes to [group] and she says I should go and see what it is like. I have this bad habit of saying, 'Oh my god' and I have never said something like 'Goddammit' but my posters kept falling down and they wouldn't stick to the cement and then I said, 'Goddammit'. She flipped out and said I shouldn't say things like that. I can understand her not wanting to hear words like that but I don't think I should have to change my speech because of her. [105F/I SE15].

Finally, roommate relations, like relations with old new friends, could be doubled edged; as a function of the size and character of the roommate's peer network, the roommate relationship could serve either as an introduction to new friends or as the basis for increased isolation.

Went to [residence] pizza to have some lunch with [name] my roommate. She's a very nice person; we're very similar except that maybe she's a bit more outgoing but that's probably because she already knows a lot of people here. [147F/D SE05].

It seems so hard to find, make new friends (except [old friend]). Everybody has at least one close friend here. Like my roommate, [name]. She is really nice but she has her best friend here at Guelph. It is hard to be included in that kind of situation. [154F/D SE06].

Turning from roommates to other new friends, much the same picture emerges, with two exceptions: first, cordiality based on **similarity** is further limited by **proximity**, typically the residence floor or the residence house; second, one-on-one relations between roommates could be expanded to involve stable groups of varying size.

I can't believe how full my schedule is. People who aren't in my [residence] house or classes I barely see. Hope that changes. [105F/D SE30].

After my [course] class, we all went to [residence] to eat. It was my first time there and I really liked it. It got really busy though just as we were leaving. [By "we"] I mean [name, name, name], me and [name] - when I refer to all of us. [161F/D SE08].

For the past month or so, its only been the girls on the same [residence] floor and me. It's only been all of us. We stick together and we got closer. So we study and we take our breaks together, we talk, and talk, and talk. Its amazing, we never run out of things to say. We just talk, get carried away, go get food to eat together, come back and talk again. We just stick together. [156F/I DE01].

As the final comment suggests, such friendship relations were cemented by joint activity, in this case, the quality of talk. The point is important, however, not just for the bonds of friendship it produced, but also because 'talk' - that is, self-disclosure leading to heightened intimacy - tended to characterize female relations only; relations among males typically involved some joint physical activity, was less intimate, and was often coloured by a subtle undercurrent of competition.

On the way out, I made a friendly bet with [roommate 1]. The wager was a beer over whether or not [female] would sleep with him. I headed back home with him and [female] a little later. It looked like I was going to lose my bet. Some time later, my roommate [2] staggered out of our room. I saw [roommate 1] down the hall just as I was about to go into my room. I had won myself a beer. He had [female] where he wanted her but he had forgotten his keys. [101M/D SE07].

Then we decided we'd have a "sleepover". I'm sleeping in [name's] bed tonight. We didn't even get ready for bed until 2 AM. It's sounds corny (we made popcorn) and sat up and talked as if we'd known each other for years. I told her all about my parents and my dad and things that have happened and she told me about a lot of stuff about her family she has never told anyone. Its a good feeling to know there's trust like that in a relationship after only two weeks. [161F/D SE18].

While relations with new friends often developed, as a previous subject (#105) noted, out of residence- or classroom-based interaction, other avenues were available, including involvement with organized groups as well as individual initiative.

I have met a lot of nice people through [group]. Its important to me to have good friends - like [roommate] - but I also want good friends with whom I can share the love of God and the salvation of Christ... Sometime while we were out at supper, the guys above us lowered two lollipops down on a string, with a note saying, "Lollipops - complements of [male] and [male], room [#]." [Roommate] got them when she came back to the room, and sent a thank-you note up to them. [113F/D SE10]. The guys in the room above us (the one's who always wake us up) had hung their laundry out on the balcony, so we stole a pair of jeans, put cookies in the pockets and pinned a message to them before returning them. [113F/D SE27].

We played volleyball. It was a good game; it was really close but we came out on top. I really enjoy playing intramurals because I'm getting to know a few of the girls in my [residence] house. After the game, we got something to eat and went to the TV room to watch Benny Hill. [147F/D OC19].

Despite these efforts, establishment of anything resembling 'close' or 'intimate' relations was far from assured, with most subjects reporting friendship relations with only a small number of others (1-5).

I think that [name 1] and [name 2] could turn out to be good friends (with me). Most acquaintances have been just that - acquaintances, and I can't see being really good friends with any of them. [123F/D SE09].

Yes, and I mean its nice to know faces and say "Hi!" to people, but there are some people you just know you can't be good friends with. [169F/I SE15].

Moreover, as with roommates, new friends could serve as a bridge to yet other potential friends. In some cases, however, the results were paradoxical, contravening the usual constraints of proximity: thus, as a function of who subjects' initial friends were, subjects could come to know people in another residence house better than they did those living only next door. Consider the following examples.

A major source of contention for [subject] is the fact that she does not get along with her housemates in [Residence 1]. [Subject] considers herself "pretty easy going" but has not found anyone who she relates to. As she puts it, "nothing clicks". [Subject] has lost a great deal of sleep over this problem and prefers to "stay away" from her room rather than put up with the "pressure". Fortunately for [subject], a friend from START (living in [residence 2]) has "adopted" her, and she has what she refers to as "squatters" rights in their "house". She is welcome on all of their outings and spends a great deal of time with them. [Subject] wishes that she had something in common with those living in her "house" but has accepted that she DOES NOT and is "getting on with her life". [buddy of 152F/I SE27].

I was hoping for a really strange new roommate that I never met before. But that never happened. I ended up with this guy from my [old high] school [as a friend]. He lives close

to where I live, just around the corner. So I always go there. I've met all the people in his [residence] house, hardly any of the people in my house [133F/I SE19].

These data present a complex portrait of the relationship between entering freshmen and their new friends. For most subjects, the desire to make new friends on entry into university was compelling. New friends were seen as essential to 'making it through' the first semester; these were people, subject's expected, with whom they would share their daily experience, give and receive support when needed and, symbolically at least, provide the impetus for growth and independence. With few exceptions, the reality of finding these new friends, forming a trusting and intimate relationship with them, and then maintaining that relationship through time proved rather more formidable than most subjects anticipated.

Perhaps the most readily accessible potential new friend was the roommate. At the University of Guelph, roommate assignment is a random affair. Roommate pairs thus thrust together must then work out the best and most workable accommodation they can. In the eyes of most subjects, what then transpired was largely a function of the degree of similarity across such dimensions as personality, past history, current interests, religious faith, academic program, work habits, and so forth. On these grounds, most roommate pairs evolved a working relationship, but only a bare majority developed the close relationship most wished for on entry.

Part of the reason relates **not** to any combination of individual attributes, but rather to the social context in which their relationship first began. In turn, that context derived from their respective peer networks, either those they brought with them prior to entry (their old friends) or those they met soon after arrival. It appears that those who introduced their roommate to their friends ensured a continuing basis for mutual interaction over and above simple proximity, and thus increased the likelihood of compatible relations. Conversely, those who had no peer network to share or who refused to do so, perhaps because their relational commitments were seen as complete, immediately foreclosed areas of future interaction. Indeed, in specific cases, it appears that the risk of coalition formation - between a roommate and her best friend **against** the other roommate - was entirely real. The result, it appears, was significant reduction in the likelihood of compatible relations.

Another possibility involved subjects who were prepared to look beyond the limited horizon of their roommate and seek out new friends elsewhere, either in their residence and/or their classroom. While no specific figures are available, inspection of subject reports suggests that for many subjects this proved fruitful, with similarity and proximity the basic criteria for the selection of eligible others. Yet here again, success was by no means assured, with a fair number of subjects disappointed in this regard. This stemmed **not** from the fact of having established a relationship of sorts with at least one new friend; indeed, sooner or later all subjects became part of at least a small peer group. Rather, their disappointment derived from two sources. First, while it was usually easy to develop a range of acquaintances, the evolution of intimate relations proved much more difficult than expected. Second, subjects varied in terms of how they defined intimacy, and thus what they wanted to get out of the relationship with their new friends. Here, females consistently used a more demanding definition than their male counterparts, with real self-disclosure valued by the former while mutual activity appeared more acceptable to the latter. Consequently, as a group, males appeared satisfied more with the number than the quality of the new relationships they developed. Such gender differences will reappear in future themes, especially as regards relationship formation (see below, **Theme 18**).

Theme 17: Peer Pressure. There is agreement in the literature that university students are influenced more by peers than by any other single source (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Newcomb & Wilson, 1966; Williams & Hall, 1988). Such influence often takes the form of pressure to conform to group norms or standards. Behaviors known to be responsive to peer pressure include sexual behavior (Sack et al., 1984), alcohol consumption (Robins & Smith, 1980) and drug use (Shute, 1974). In this context, the terms 'influence' and 'pressure' are often used interchangeably. Moreover, the terms are used in a generic sense, without reference to gender.

Comparing such usage with subject reports reveals two things: the distinction between 'influence' and 'pressure' was meaningful and not merely rhetorical, and, moreover, had gender-specific referents. In accord with subject reports, **peer pressure** was comprised of the following elements: (1) the enactment of

behavior(s) that would not have occurred under different circumstances; (2) motivated primarily by a strong desire to be 'part of' or 'belong to' a given same-sex peer group; (3) in which the group in question was perceived as a single, undifferentiated unit; and (4) in which the enactment was associated with an affective rather than a cognitive response. **Peer influence**, in contrast, was constituted quite differently: (1) the enactment of behavior that was consistent with pre-existing principles and values; (2) involved a compromise in the interests of cordial relations among group members; (3) in which the group was perceived in terms of a set of specific, identifiable individuals; and (4) in which the enactment was associated with a cognitive response. In general, males were sensitive to peer pressure while females were responsive to peer influence.

The following comments illustrate the process of peer pressure in operation among males; note the difference in tone between male and female subjects.

[Male] was drinking which I haven't seen him do yet. He says he used to drink often. I think he is feeling pressure to "fit in" with the other guys. [161F/D SE08].

I didn't get home from [couple's] 'til midnight. [Roommate's] sister, [name], came down for the weekend, so we talked for awhile. Some friend of [female's] - a very large, very drunk guy - came in and chastised us for not being drunk on homecoming weekend. Guess we're failed as frosh! [113F/D SE27].

About 9:00 [PM], [male], myself and a couple of other guys were riding in the back seat of [male's] pick up truck [on] our first [residence] floor trip - the Chooch. I'm not very impressed by strippers (especially at sleazy bars like the Chooch), but it was fun being there with the guys. [101M/D SE15].

Wake up lazy head. [Male] on the floor asks if I can play badminton at A[thletic] C[entre]. Some people on the floor have booked part of the gym to play. I really want to study [course] but in the end I decide to play. [116M/D SE11].

And another [thing] is my religious background [as a Christian], trying to fit into the people on the floor. 'Cause they don't know that I go to [religious group] on certain days, that I believe in this... One thing I'm scared of is being rejected by everybody else if they do know, especially my roommate. [101M/I SE28].

I'm pretty close to a lot of people on our floor ... I think the thing "you get used to" is sometimes the fact that you're living with a lot of people. People are at university and these are young guys away from home for the first time, so they like to party and you get used to the broken glass every now and then and things like that. Those are the things you get used to and aren't always the most pleasant. Those are the things you get used to, and you just have to shrug them off, you can't go around worrying about it. [101M/I NV28].

Thus, among male subjects, peer pressure meant doing things they might otherwise have chosen not to do - like getting drunk or going to a strip show - as well as coming to accept otherwise objectionable behavior on the part of others on their residence floor. Further, note that in the final comment, the possibility of actively resisting such behavior does not arise. It might be argued that these examples are nothing about which one need be concerned; these are, after all, grown men and if they choose to get drunk from time to time, they harm no one but themselves.

Perhaps. But what about the situation in which such pressure inflicts potential harm on others? Consider the following scenario as regards one of the informal activities associated with freshman orientation: males search out females at random, "mock" kidnap them to a waiting hay wagon and then spirit them off to a party on a nearby farm. Such an event occurred and by chance was recorded in the diary of a female subject. A male subject who participated was subsequently questioned about it in interview. As the following comments suggest, each saw the event in quite different terms.

Talked about the Engineering party where students "abducted" women students; saw it all [as] good fun; he himself would approach girls and invite them; if they were not interested, he would not insist; did not feel that any woman who went, went against her will. Girls who refused simply because they wanted to study were still brought along. The party was at a [course] prof's farm: bonfire, BBQ, a lot of beer; a few got drunk; four buses available to bring people and their "guests" back. [buddy of 116M/I SE23].

Tonight [female] and I were in the U.C. looking at posters when a bunch of engineers came in and started grabbing girls. I didn't know what was going on, so I tried to run away. Then some guy got me from behind and started to drag me out a door. I was pretty scared so I started to fight with him, but he wouldn't let me go. They were collecting girls, putting them on hayrides and not letting them go. I had heard of engineers kidnapping girls, getting them drunk and taking advantage of them, but I didn't really believe it was going to happen. [Female] and I ended up jumping off the hayride and running for our lives. (We escaped.) I have never felt so helpless before in my entire life. I wanted to go home right then. Sometimes I just don't feel very safe here. [119F/D SE19].

The radically different perception of "the kidnapping" by male and female subjects does not end there. Rather, it extends to daily life. Whereas previous comments by male subjects appear indicative of peer pressure, the following comments by female subjects are more suggestive of peer influence, including the freedom to deviate at will.

[In high school] I used to spend a lot of time by myself in my room with the radio playing, reading, doing homework, so that cut down on a lot of the stress. I was by myself, so if I wanted to swear, I would swear, if I wanted to cry until I couldn't cry anymore, I could. And

it didn't really matter. Q: you don't have those escape mechanisms now? Oh, I probably could, if I wanted to. But the walls are thin, people'd think I should be locked up somewhere. [162F/1 DE05].

[Male 1] and [male 2] walked me back to my [residence] room and they crashed on my floor. It sorta bothered me that they were there. And people were sort of wondering. I guess I am sort of self-conscious about what people think of me. I guesss that's because I was always made fun of in grade school [104F/D SE09].

Some of the girls on the [residence] floor who stayed for the weekend had wanted me to go out for dinner with them last night, but I couldn't because I was waiting for [boyfriend]. This morning some of them actually saw him, and a few minutes later he overheard them saying, "No wonder she didn't come out with us last night!" He apologized profusely for what he had caused them to be thinking, but I didn't care. Let them think whatever they want! A little scandal is healthy sometimes. [144F/D SE17].

Tonight there was a street dance outside of [residence]. I went to it with my friends and from there we went to a number of parties in different residences. Everyone was quite drunk and it was the first time this week that I had gone out partying and drinking. It's stange, but it was the first time that I felt that I belonged. I was doing the exact same thing as everyone else and it almost like I was doing what was expected of me. It did feel good, though, to let off some steam and relieve the tension that had been building up. [119F/D SE09].

I don't feel that I'm becoming a nerd, you know. I joined up for aerobics, so I do that twice a week. I think I have a pretty good balance, it's just like I'm a trout going against a stream with everybody wanting to have a good time. [112F/D SE29].

I'm not supposed to be here [in my room] yet I am; I'm supposed to be out all night, or that's what they say. I thought of another feeling I have about this. Confusion! Everybody, or the majority seems to always want to be drunk. Is that the only way to have a good time? Part of me wants to be part of that crowd, but it isn't really in my nature. I am shy and I seem attracted [to] similar friends at first. I want to be part of the "crowd" but it is difficult when there are so many new and intimidating faces. [154F/D SE06].

In light of these comments, two issues stand out as especially important, both in the context of this theme as well as futher themes. The first concerns the greater degree of introspection and self-reflexivity among women compared to men. While all subjects appeared to be aware of what "others" expected of them, only female subjects made that awareness explicit and then thought through whether or not to comply (whatever the cost in guilt). The second concerns the need to qualify a previous inference. I noted above (see **Theme 15**) that men seemed to have an easier time than women making new friends. While nothing in the present section is inconsistent with this inference, it now appears that male friendliness was achieved at some cost, for once formed, the subsequent maintenance of these relationships appeared to require

conformity with group norms, even when they involved non-preferred behavior. It is hard to imagine that this would not introduce some measure of tension into these otherwise gratifying relationships.

Theme 18: Support versus Demand. Two ways have already been noted in which friends could be a mixed blessing: old friends could impede the formation of new relationships; and, new friends could slow contact with still other new people. In this section, a third area of ambivalence around friends will be explored, namely, that the reciprocal obligations of friendship meant that friends could be **both** a source of support as well as demand. As used by subjects, support referred both to mutual understanding as well as to practical aid; both were seen as central to the process of transition, both academic and social. Having received support, however, it was not unreasonable for the giver to expect that support to be returned, and to have this done when it was needed by the other, not when it was convenient for the giver. This captures subjects' sense of the nature of demand, that is, of giving up or sacrificing something in the interests both of the other and, as important, the maintenance of the relationship between giver and receiver.

Turning first to support, subject reports make clear that both forms of support were both freely and spontaneously available, and this aspect of peer relations was highly valued.

I went back home [to my room] after two hours, to find [female 1] and [female 2] worried about me. [Female 1] confessed how she went through my purse and drawers to find [boyfriend's telephone] number and talk to him, plus she left a package of M & M's and a note on my desk offering a shoulder of support. I realized how worried she was about me, and it made me feel 100% better knowing someone gives a damn. [112F/D SE22].

Everyone was really nice yesterday, they all saw I was upset about something and they kept giving me hugs, etc. Even [male] gave me a hug. I felt that if I get another hug and if I'm asked what's wrong one more time I'm going to throw up. Then [roommate] gave me a big hug and I really started to cry. I don't know why this whole thing is bothering me so much. [Roommate] is great though. She tried her damnest to cheer me up. She bought me ice cream and we stayed up 'til 2 AM talking (and I typed her assignment while she wrote and I read.) [104F/D SE29].

One of my friends [female] became very upset this day. She was in a bad state because she was getting behind in homework due to studying for the mid-terms. Homework was really getting too much to handle. She came to me in tears. I hate to see anybody upset, so I tried to calm her down and bring some light to the situation. After joking with her she was a lot better. Anybody who has trouble doing homework or anything, friends help a lot. [116M/D OC24].

While such assistance could be directional, that is, from one person to another, in other cases support was mutual and simultaneous. The fact that both parties were going through much the same experience also meant that the support offered was typically appropriate to the situation, indeed more so than that offered by others, such as parents.

The studying didn't last too long as [roommate] and I were both in very mellow (non-studious moods). She'd had a real bad day and was discouraged and I just didn't feel like studying. We had a really deep talk ... It was great! I got almost a natural high talking about the creation of the universe! We went over to [residence] about 10 PM and got some food - popcorn and M & Ms. We demolished one package of microwave popcorn in about an hour between us. [113F/D SE29].

We're good for each other I think. One night I was in a really bad mood and she was getting in a bad mood and I started yelling at her about something. And she started hitting me and I started hitting her back, and she banged my leg and hurt her hand. And I said, "Do you feel better?" and she said, "Yes. Do you?" and I said, "Yes, I feel fine." She goes, "Are you done?" I said, "Yes." So, OK, we gave each other a hug and went back to our homework. [104F/I DE01].

Not a lot more [support] than my parents, but a different kind of source [of support] because my parents don't know what I'm going through as much as [my friends] do. [My friends] know exactly what I'm going through. You sit down and start talking to somebody and say I'm going home and it will be really great and they tell you how much they want to go home [too]... [Friends] support you because they are going through the same thing and its not that my parents aren't a good support - because they are - they're just not as good [as my friends] because they're not around as much and they're not going through the same things as everybody else in my residence is.... [117F/D DE13].

Whether being offered by one person to another, or provided on a mutual basis, support was typically offered spontaneously, as a measure of friendship. Thus, the need to ask for assistance changed the meaning of the act, denoting a failure of empathy on the part of the other.

Funny thing. I don't approach [roommate] with problems. Rather be bitchy and avoid her. Want her to ask what's wrong, pick up my cues. [112F/D SE25].

As the previous comments suggest, such failures were not a common occurrence. Rather, support was readily forthcoming. However, too often discussion of support focuses on the receiver, with little attention to the giver. As the following comments make clear, giving, however satisfying, often constituted a severe demand on the time and effort of the giver, a demand which could also have academic repercussions.

Well, I didn't think much else could go wrong this week. That's a laugh. [Roommate] was sick every hour from 4 AM on so I didn't get much sleep. At 8:30 AM I got [mále](this big

guy in our lounge) to carry her to Med Services. We waited 'til 10 AM to find out they were keeping her in there for the day. So I went back and slept which made me miss all my classes. [117F/D OC19].

I can't believe this happened to me. Last night I stayed up pretty late studying. When I finally went to bed I was exhausted. Then, at 2:30 AM the phone rings. It was [roommate's] boyfriend, [name]; figures. To make a long story short he was lonely and wanted to talk to her but she was tired and kept hanging up on him. Of course, he kept phoning back. By 3:00 AM I was still awake. Finally, this silly game stopped and I went back to sleep. About an hour later I was awakened by a knock on the door and what do you know, it was [male]. I wasn't very impressed with this visit and of course I was too awake to go back to sleep... [The next day] the [course] mid'term was unreal. I don't think I did very well. I was pretty distracted throughout the test and all I could think of was my bed, and I don't even get to sleep. [133F/D NV15].

Well, what a weekend! I fell asleep Saturday night until the wild party next door woke me up. I was feeling quite sick and by the time I woke up anyone I knew was no longer around. Eventually, about 10:30 [PM], [female] showed up at my door. I spent the next two and a half hours trying to get her drunk roommate into her own bed. She was insisting on sleeping in front of [male's] door. We figured she'd regret it come morning, so we wanted to move her. She decided she'd like to sleep in the guy's bathtub. I think eventually she made it to her own bed. [154F/D SE26].

When [male 1] returned he had calmed down some but not much... He said maybe I should leave. I got up and left the room when he grabbed me and threw me against the wall and started yelling at me. This continued for eight minutes then he let me go. I hesitated before moving and that was my first mistake. A kleenex box came flying down the hall. I opened the door and fled down the stairs. The kleenex box was fired again. By the time I got to [male 2's] room [male 1] was just about on top of me. My second mistake was going into [male 2's] room. I was backed into a corner. [Male 1] started hitting me with the box, but it broke so he continued with his fists. [Male 2] was stunned, as was everyone else who was present. After about 1:30 [AM] [male 2] pulled [male 1] off of me and I ran to save my life. (I don't think I've ever been so scared in all my life. I went to [female's] room and shook for an hour and a half). [162F/D SE26].²⁴

In less extreme form, these comments accurately reflected the experience of all subjects in their relations with friends. Reciprocity in personal relationships was expected. There are, however, two aspects of the foregoing accounts which render them especially significant. The first is that they occurred within a larger academic context that was itself highly demanding. In this sense, what merits notice is the fact that

²⁴ Approximately one month later, male 1 in this comment attempted suicide: I was studying for my history midterm, when at 10:45 [PM] I got a call from [male 1]. He took 15-20 sleeping pills with a mixed drink. He wanted to know what to do. He came over and I called Med Services. They aren't very organized there because it took half an hour for someone to come and get him to take him to the hospital. [162F/D OC23]. Male 1 survived and subsequently underwent a course of individual psychotherapy.

subject efforts at mutual support occurred **despite** simultaneously competing academic demand, indeed, on occasion, even at the latter's expense. This helps put in perspective the view of most subjects, that social relations were, if not more important than academic matters, than at least as important; certainly without them, subject's academic efforts would have been seen by them as meaningless. In accord with Becker et al. (1968), this is to suggest that subject's view of the purpose of university entry is rather more complex, more multidimensional, than the traditional view which accords primacy to academic performance.

The second reason these accounts are important is that they lead to the inference that social relations among same-sex peers is more likely to involve a variable rather than a continuous course. While smooth and continuously satisfying relations between peers was the experience of some subjects, they were decidedly in the minority. Rather, ups and down in their mutual relations, often congruent with variation in support and demand, was the order of the day, a point that will be further elaborated in the next theme.

Theme 19: Temporal Course of Friendship. It is commonly held in the literature, often without data (see Kelley, 1986), that the typical course of friendship relationships is continuous (Duck & Miell, 1986). Consequently, efforts to track such relationships through time remain scarce (Reis, 1986; cf. Hays, 1984, 1985). When such efforts are made, the results are often counterintuitive. For example, Duck and Miell (1986) found that female undergraduates spent more time in same-sex interaction whereas their male counterparts spent more time in cross-sex interaction. Further, respondents were highly variable as regards who initiated interaction, what actually took place, and the stability of both satisfaction and intimacy. Indeed, these relationships were characterized best by uncertainty.

Even so, the authors failed to distinguish between different temporal courses. This apparently remains the province of investigators of romantic relations, in which several different relationship types, each with its own typical temporal course, are differentiated (eg., Ginsburg, 1986).

Data from student subjects, however, support the latter formulation and not the former. Specifically, at least as regards roommate relations (about which data were both most voluminous and most systematic),

three distinct patterns could be distinguished: **best friends**, **intimate acquaintances**, and **pseudointimate friends**.

Best Friends. Roommates who had made of each other a "best friend" had achieved a high degree of intimacy. This included such qualities as mutual trust, respect, self-disclosure and affection. It also denoted frequent (often daily) interaction, mutual involvement (both socially and academically), and mutual support.

As might be expected, this type of relationship often took a good deal of time to evolve, and, on a day-to-day basis, was highly variable, with ups and downs a function not only of the dynamics of their relationship but also of outside events (eg., exams) and people (eg., romantic others, parents). Nevertheless, the trend was consistently in the direction of increasing intimacy and closeness. While such closeness could denote relational exclusivity - they were each others **only** best friend - this was typically not the case, the roommate a member of a small circle of close friends. Whatever the number involved, the **best friend** relationship was not common among roommates, with approximately 35% of **female** subjects with roommates falling in this category.

The following comments provide some sense of what it felt like to be in such a relationship.

[Name], my roommate and I were talking about that and saying that we're the only two on the floor that didn't ... know each other before and haven't had a problem. We get along so well, it's unreal. I think a lot of this is that we don't spend all of [our] time together. That was my biggest worry coming to university, "What is my roommate going to be like?" And even when I did see her, I thought, "Oh, I'm in for it now!" But, it turned out so well! [161F/I DE13].

But [name] and I, it started slowly. But we've gotten to be very good friends. We talk, we respect each other, we'll tell each other little exciting tidbits of our life. We didn't really say we were going to exchange gifts [for Christmas], but I just told her, one day, way back in early November, I bought Christmas cards, but I said, "I can't show you one!" We never openly discussed whether we would exchange gifts, but I wasn't going to mention it to her just because I said whether she gives me a gift or not, I want to give her one. [120F/I DE14].

At the beginning of the year we went through the Roommate Starter Kit, we just talked about where we come from and that kind of thing.... Initially, she had warned me that she was very moody. And I found that was definitely true! She could be fine and dandy one hour and the next hour, "Don't talk to me!" When she is mad, don't talk to her 'cause you either don't get any response or you get your head bitten off! I think it sort of developed. It wasn't always easy and I think a couple of times we might have had misunderstandings. In general, I think it was fine. There was a couple of times when I'd come out and say, "Hi,

how'd it go?" and not get any response. On the other hand, I'm sure that happened the other way around, that she'd come in and try to talk and I'd be buried in something. We're not ready to tear each other to shreds. I know some people who are! [113F/I DE16].

Intimate Acquaintances. The "best friend" relationship among roommates was the ideal, sought after and hoped for by the majority of subjects with roommates. But, as the preceding comments attest, hoping by itself was not nearly enough; it also required sustained effort, especially as regards conflict management and resolution. This combination of skill and effort was frequently not forthcoming. Moreover, blinded by their expectations, many subjects experienced a 'honeymoon' period in which incipient sources of conflict were apparently invisible and the relationship was experienced as highly satisfying.

As with romantic couples, so it was with roommates: such euphoria does not and did not last. Sooner or later, they were confronted by heretofore unseen differences. Those in the "best friends" category worked through such sources of division. Intimate acquaintances did not. Rather, they preferred other, less functional methods, most notably a combination of avoidance, unvoiced hostility, blaming the other, and the attribution to the other of immutable personality characteristics inimical to the relationship.

Over the course of the first semester, what emerged was a relationship whose initial trend was towards increasing intimacy. This encompassed the 'honeymoon' period but was soon followed by rapid and sustained decay. On a day-to-day basis, relations among these roommates were characterized by extremely high variability; commonplace was cosy compatibility one day followed by frigid silence the next. In the end, the much sought after sense of intimacy never was achieved. In its place, what materialized was a relationship between acquaintances who never did come to know each other very well. Further, as their relationship ended with the completion of semester 1, subject's affective responses varied. The predominant response was one of ambivalence: satisfaction insofar as they had survived the experience but sadness that something more had not come of it. Other responses were rather more negative, including resentment, hostility and bitterness. Among **female** subjects with roommates, approximately 65% fell in the "intimate acquaintances" category.

In an effort to capture the major trends in this category, a dated sequence of comments will be presented taken from the diaries of two subjects. Comments from other subjects provide some sense of the range of affective responses.

Subject 123

[Female 1], [roommate] and I sit in our room and talk for hours tonight. Its great to be able to talk to people - I was always worried about being lonely at university. [123F/D OC13].

[Female 1], [roommate] and I talk for a while after dinner, then [female 1] and I get ready to go to the Bull Ring [campus bar] ([roommate] isn't 19). The Ring is too busy and Derks [campus bar] is too dead, so we just walk around singing dumb songs. We have a nice talk too. We're getting to be good friends, I think. Later, [roommate] and I talk until its really late and we get into fits of laughter. Its great. [123F/D OC14].

I do [course] all afternoon. I hate it with a passion. I'm in a wickedly bad mood today. [roommate and I] eat with [female] again tonight. I need to go home for a while. I feel like no one REALLY cares [about me] here. [123F/D OC19].

[Roommate] and I walk to the bank and to the drugstore. I later realize that I left my [course] notebook at the bank! Ack! When I try to talk to [roommate] about it, she is reading a letter from her friend [back home] and laughing away at it - ignoring me. It really pisses me off because she can be so self centered. I get over it, though. [123F/D NV01].

Subject 133

[Roommate] and I spent a few hours just talking about the weekend and anything else that came into our head. We've become quite close even though I had my doubts at first. But I also realize that I have to live with her for the rest of the year and so I try to avoid disagreements. [133F/D OC16].

[Roommate] and I are getting along. But I really have to make an effort to get along with her. Sometimes I find it very difficult to keep my mouth shut but I know I have to in order to keep the peace 'til April. [133F/D NV01].

Later in the afternoon, I got a ride back to the university from [couple]. I slept most of the way and only woke up when we were almost there. I was glad to be back but [roommate] had to spoil it. On Friday night, after Commencement, I went to a bar with a couple of my friends. [Roommate] went to a different bar. Now she's mad and even says that anyone who wasn't with her is not her friend. How childish!!! And I have to live with her until April! [133F/D NV06].

[Roommate] came back too. She was in a lousy mood and her whining just wouldn't stop. I can't believe that she'd talk so much behind other people's back but she sure does. I was getting so annoyed that I just had to leave the room. [133F/D NV13].

Other Subjects

That was the week that I told [roommate] what really bothers me about her. We're getting along very well right now, but I don't trust the girl at all. I will be very pleasant with her for the rest of the school year, but I will be thankful when I have a single [room] in the Fall. I think that she has somehow turned [female] against me (or else [female] is just a major bitch) because now they are best friends and [female] only talks to me if she needs help in [course]. I couldn't really care less about having either of them as friends because they're just not worth it. [147F/D DE01].

A little bit [of difficulty with roommate], well, actually a lot. [Roommate and I] still go out for dinner sometimes, but other than that, we basically do our own thing. Q: At one point you [and your roommate] were really almost best friends? Yeah. I think that's partly changed because of getting to know more people and getting involved in different clubs. Generally, [we get along] good. She has her moments. I'm sure I do too, but I don't think quite so often. The last few weeks have been really bad. Usually, if I'm [in our room] myself, she's fine. The odd time she might not talk at all to me that day. But if have a friend over, or if [male 1] comes over or if [male 2's] there, she won't talk at all, or she'll pack up and leave. [144F/I NV21].

Pseudointimate Friends. This final category was a male preserve. Before describing the dynamics of this relationship category, several caveats are in order. First, only three of the four male subjects lived in residence; the fourth lived at home. Second, two of the three lived in "quads", that is, suites designed to accommodate four students. Third, the typical definition of a "group" varied by gender; among female subjects, a group referred to something in the order of 2-4 others; among male subjects, larger clusters of 5-15 (and even larger) were more common.²⁵ Taken together, these caveats suggest that the following account of male roommate relations be seen as tentative.

Reading the diaries and the interviews of male subjects with roommates, one is immediately struck by the rapidity with which subjects referred to roommates as "good friends". It soon became apparent that the term had quite a different meaning than when used by female subjects. Unlike females, who used the term to denote intimacy, among males it simply referred to roommates who got along in a cordial manner, with little overt conflict. Concomitantly, they also spent a good deal of time together, had a high frequency of contact and were involved in a range of mutual activity, albeit often in the presence of a larger

²⁵ For more systematic evidence of the "group" character of much male activity, see below, Theme 32.

group of floormates. Some male subjects even noted talking to each other about personal matters, talk which they saw as indicative of closeness. It was only when the quality of such "talk" was compared to that of their female counterparts that it became apparent that the depth of talk on any given topic and the number of personal topics discussed were both quite limited, hence the "pseudointimate" character of their relationship.²⁶

Thus, despite the appearance and the rhetoric of intimacy, these were men who, though they usually had fun together, knew each other and were content to know each other, superficially. As for the temporal course of roommate pairs in this category, this typically involved a short but rapid trend towards pseudo-intimacy followed by a stable plateau which varied little thereafter. The pseudointimate character of male roommate relations is illustrated by the following comments, the first two specific to a roommate pair, the third more general but encompassing his roommate(s).

[My roommate and I] get along pretty well. We're not the goodest of buddies. I don't think we'll be great friends after university. I think after a year or so, if we're not roommates again, we'll probably drift apart as friends, but for now, he's an alright person to be with. It's better than with somebody who's noisy and doesn't care what they're doing, and doesn't care about you. I'm quite pleased [with] my roommate. [101M/I SE28].

Yeah, I have friends that have become fairly close on the [residence] floor. I find my roommate I can talk to, he's a good friend in a sense. Q: That's a change because when we first talked, your roommate was OK but you didn't think you'd ever be that close buddies? Yeah, that's funny, that's changed because there is still that thing of, I think, when it comes to going out together and stuff like that, I think we have different interests. But I think he's a close friend in the sense [that] I can talk to him about problems and he can do the same. I like to think he can do the same thing with me. I think that has changed, yeah. I realize he's a closer friend than I thought. [101M/I NV28].

[Today] was my last day at work. It's sad leaving behind some more frineds - sure some of them have my address, but if they're as poor at keeping in touch with me as I usually am, I'll never see them again. That kind of bothers me - I must know over a thousand people whom I don't ever expect to see again. Maybe it will be different this time [at the university], but I doubt it. [151M/D OC02].

These data support two inferences. The first, and most obvious, is that, despite the high hopes of many entering freshmen, few roommates relations ever evolved into "best friends". There were a variety of

²⁶ This is not to suggest that freshman males with roommates could not a relationship more consistent with that observed among females subjects, only that that was not the case among male study subjects.

reasons for this: the high demands of the academic context; the random nature of room assignment; the shock of transition; competing demands for old and new friends alike; the relatively short duration of the first semester; and, the hot-house atmosphere of the residence (see below, **Theme 32**) - all worked against the evolution of a truly intimate relationship. Most important of all, however, appear to be the relational skills required to work through the interpersonal differences which inevitably arose. At 18 or 19 years of age, the majority of subjects simply did not have the resources to master this difficult task. Indeed, this said, it is remarkable that subjects managed as well as they obviously did; there was very little evidence of overt conflict or gross dysfunction. Rather, differences, if not handled well, were at least managed with tolerance and forbearance. Further, a minority of subjects actually managed to surmount their differences and appeared to achieve genuine intimacy.

Second, the goal of "genuine" intimacy was neither equally shared across subjects nor was it defined in the same way. Such divergence split the subjects along gender lines. Intimacy was a goal of female subjects and, though they did not all succeed, all worked hard towards this end nevertheless. Cordiality is a better way to describe the relationship sought after by male subjects. This included getting along with a minimum of friction and engaging in mutually satisfying activity. If it proved possible to talk together about personal matters, this was seen as a bonus rather than a necessity. Thus, the various relationship categories used above reflect a bias in favor of the female ideal of intimacy as the criterion against which all subjects relations were judged. On the one hand, this is ironic in the extreme, for as Gilligan (1982) and others (eg., Belensky et al., 1986) have noted, it is male behavior that has typically been used as the standard in the literature. On the other hand, it calls in question the extent to which, at least in relational terms, males and female experience is truly comparable.

Discussion

It is held in the literature that peer relations are an important part of undergraduate socialization. In light of the data presented above, this statement, while true, is incomplete in a least **six** ways.

First, it is an **understatement**. The salience of peer relations to the transition experience of freshman students simply cannot be overemphasized. Rather, such relations were integral to the experience, accounting for much of its meaning, its pleasure, its drama and its consequences, both social and academic. Indeed, seen through the eyes of freshmen, peer relations could, as a reason for coming to university, be even more important than the academic work itself. Nor was this merely a sentiment born of adolescent emotional hyperbole; it was eminently practical. The university represented unknown territory, filled with challenges and pitfalls. To be alone under such circumstances was to court failure, fear and terrible aloneness. Joining with others, while it could not guarantee success, at least increased the odds by ensuring ready access to peers as sources of succorance, support, assistance and enjoyment.

Second, it is **undifferentiated**. In common usage, peers (plural) refer to relations with more than one other, typically what I have referred as a 'new friends'. However, this disregards the on-going involvement of old old friends, fails to distinguish between roommates, old new friends and other new friends, and ignores any difference between same-sex and cross-sex friends. Data presented above suggest that each of these differences was consequential for the first semester experience of entering freshmen. Even more important than each individual difference was their collective difference, that is, an important source of variation in the experience of freshman students was the particular **configuration** of the peer group. For example, the transition to university often meant the loss of old old friends, and an ambivalent relationship with old new friends, while roommates could facilitate or impede relations with other new friends, and so on.

Third, it **underestimates** the special status of the roommate relationship. While this need not be the closest, and thus the most developmentally salient, relationship of all, the likelihood that it will be is high. As previously noted, extensive research effort has sought to explore this relationship in order to discover the central basis of roommate compatibility. Invariably, such efforts have focused on one dimension at a time (eg., Carey et al., 1988). Data reviewed above pinpoint the flaw in such efforts: they apply a simpleminded model to a complex phenomenon. Put differently, this is to suggest that such efforts grossly underestimate the importance of two sources of variation in roommate relationships. First, research to date

has tended to focus on one of several individual attributes while ignoring interactional processes, including typological variation among such processes. Second, such relationships do not operate in a vacuum; rather, they are necessarily embedded in a particular social contexts of old and new friends, boyfriends and girlfriends (see below, **Theme 19**), parents and other family members (see below, **Theme 26**), and still others. Such factors cannot but contribute in important ways to the course, outcome and satisfaction of roommate relations.

Fourth, it **understates** the mixed character of peer relations. Student subjects entered the university with high hopes. These included the image of blissful and trouble-free relations with peers. In some cases, this vision was more or less reproduced in their experience. Friends came easily and in abundance. But this was a minority experience. More typically, evolving close friends was a challenging and demanding undertaking. Friends were fickle, demanding and unsupportive; loyalties shifted and changed, and **your** best friend of today was someone else's best friend the next day. Most important, the relationship between people, apparently based on **similarity**, was unexpectedly and repeatedly marred by **differences** which did not go away. Consequently, most peer relationships were characterized by some degree of ambivalence, mixtures of satisfaction, resentment, joy, anger and disappointment.

Fifth, it **underrates** evidence of **cross-linkage**. This refers to processes which cross the boundaries between domains, in this case, between the personal and the interpersonal. This appears to involve two processes. First, subject's sense of personal identity was not maintained in isolation. Rather, it was intimately linked to relations with significant others, peers chief among them. In this sense, peer relations served two critical functions, that of reaffirming a subject's sense of self **and** of approving, even encouraging, change in self-identification. Second, peer relations were also consequential in the academic sphere. Academic performance was **not** a single product of a given set of personal attributes; rather, it is better thought of as an on-going process which daily arises out of the interaction of a shifting array of factors. Chief among these was the character of relations with various peers. Such relations provided practical academic support (eg., tutoring), shared activity (eg., studying), stress management (eg., shared laughter), encouragement (eg., following a setback) as well as accolades (eg., following a success). In turn, such activity fed back to

influence future performance as well as subsequent motivation, and in both senses was influential in shaping and supporting freshmen academic efforts. Additional evidence in the same direction will be explored in later sections within this domain.

Finally, it **ignores** the differences which arise based on **gender**. Evidence reviewed above makes clear that male and female freshmen, though they shared a range of attributes and experiences, also lived in different social worlds. Much in accord with current feminist formulations (eg., Baxter, 1986; Gilligan, 1982), the female approach to relations with others was fundamentally **relational** in orientation compared to the male approach which was more **instrumental** in character. Thus, females judged the character of their relations with friends **not** in terms of whether or not they were intimate, but rather to what degree they were intimate, with the desire for intimacy simply assumed. Further, such relations were supportive and non-competitive, thus encouraging increasing self-disclosure, and were heavily centered on shared talk. For these reason, though many females enjoyed males as friends, most preferred same-sexed others, especially as close friends. In contrast, males judged the character of their relations with friends in terms of shared activity. While intimacy could evolve, it did not appear to be a primary objective (cf. Derlega et al., 1985; Dosser et al., 1986). Moreover, for intimacy to arise, the tension and competitiveness which characterized male peer relations had somehow to be overcome. This helps explain why many males actually felt more comfortable, and were more willing to be self-disclosing, in the company of their female friends.

Subdomain: ROMANTIC PARTNERS

Theme 20: Salience of a Romantic Partner. The past 15 years has witnessed nothing less than a revolution in the study of romantic relationships (Bersheid & Peplau, 1983; Brehm, 1985; Peplau & Gordon, 1985). Once embedded in a larger concern with interpersonal relations, the study of "close relationships" is increasingly become a field of study in its own right (Kelley et al., 1983). Symbolic of this coming of age was the publication of the **Journal of Social and Personal Relationships**, in 1984, devoted exclusively to the study

of close relationships.²⁷ Equally important have been a series of methodological shifts: among them, first, an increasing preference for subjects selected from among people in love as opposed to strangers (Kelley, 1986); and, second, an increasing interest in what people do as opposed to what they think or feel (Baxter & Wilmot, 1986; Ginsberg, 1986). The one thing that has not changed is that undergraduate students, given their ready availability, continue to constitute the bulk of study subjects (Cunningham & Antill, 1981).

The result has been a virtual explosion of research covering a wide range of related topics. A selected list of such topics includes the following: romantic partners and (positive) adjustment at university (Herold, 1979; Long, 1983); the dynamics of romantic relationships (Eiderson, 1980; Reis et al., 1980; Rubin et al., 1980; White, 1980); the physiological effects of being in love (Kemper & Bologh, 1981); typological variation among courting couples (Duck, 1982; Huston et al., 1981; Prager, 1983); sexuality (Darling et al., 1984; Herold, 1984; Peplau et al., 1977); lovers and their social network (Milardo et al., 1983); courtship violence (Deal & Wampler, 1986; Lane & Gwartney-Gibbs, 1985); relationship dissolution (Baxter, 1984; Hill et al., 1976); and, gender differences (Fischer, 1981; Fischer & Sollie, 1986; Hendrick et al., 1984; Hodgson & Fischer, 1979).

The thrust of this body of work is that a relationship with a romantic other is critically important to most adults, irrespective of age or gender, including, of course, those in the undergraduate population. Only a few of the studies cited above are specific to freshmen. Nevertheless, most student subjects would likely agree with their findings, that involvement with a romantic other is a salient issue for them. I say "most" since 29% of study subjects, including three of the four males, reported no romantic involvements during the course of this study; all other subjects either arrived at the university already involved in a romantic relationship or entered into one shortly thereafter. Of the latter, the majority of the boyfriends in question (80%) were still in high school 'back home'; the remainder were either attending another university, completing a vocational program at a community college or had left school and were in full-time

²⁷ For a comprehensive overview of the field, the best single source is the five-volume series edited by Duck and Gilmour (1981a, 1981b, 1981c) and Duck (1982, 1984). See most recently Gilmour and Duck (1986).

employment.²⁸ Of the former, most had both never had such an involvement nor were they unduly concerned about it.

The qualitative data add substance to these statistics. A good place to begin is with subject's comments attesting to the on-going salience of their relationship with their boyfriends despite the geographic distance that separated them. Further, they reaffirm their commitment to these relationships despite their on-going fear that in their absence their boyfriends could 'dump' them for someone new.

I hate to say this but I really need somebody. I need [boyfriend]. I wish he was here. Will it work? I didn't cry yet. [156F/D SE05] I love [boyfriend]! And I know he loves me even though he doesn't say it. He's just afraid to let his feelings go too far too soon. And so all we do is say, 'I like you'. [156F/D SE07].

I had a phone call from [name], my boyfriend, today. As I talked to him I began to cry and felt as if I missed him very much. If I'm not thinking about him or talking to him on the phone, I don't really feel that upset. It's almost like he's in a completely different world and I feel distant from him. I still have the same feelings [of love], but I feel far away. [119F/D SE08].

We are still a couple and are both willing to face the hard work involved in keeping our love strong. Knowing that the odds are against us makes every, "I love you." even more delicious to hear. We're going to make it! [112F/D SE04]. That night I called [boyfriend] and told him I missed him. It gave me strength just to hear his voice. Knowing someone is missing me, having someone to share my experiences with, someone to concentrate loving feelings on, makes me feel incredibly strong. [112F/D SE05].

Now I'll tell you about [name], my boyfriend. I love him very much and I care for him a lot. We have been going out for [...] months. After about a year we made love to each other. That was a very nice experience. It was hard to separate from one another but we both knew we had to go to school and pursue our careers to get anywhere in life. [104F/D SE08].

Then [boyfriend] called. I almost felt like crying because I was lonely and I wanted to be with him. I didn't want him to hear me cry though. Thus I didn't really cry. He gave me his phone number. We might visit each other. He is only [...] minutes away. [134F/D SE07] ...I've never been lucky enough to have gone out with anyone before [boyfriend]. I was always the smart, quiet, shy one and guys tended to forget about me or they were afraid of me. [134F/D SE13].

Missed a phone call from [boyfriend] while I was out. Feel bad because he said he would call. Afraid he'll be upset and will soon get sick of me. I really don't want things to change [between us] and so far I haven't seen anything better. I'm trying to avoid the "falling" for

²⁸ The duration of these relations was highly variable, ranging from three months to three years, the average being about six months.

all the good looking guys syndrome. Right now I have too much to lose if I do and I think it would be a terrible mistake. [120F/D SE11].

This combination of fear and commitments meant that female subjects were continually in search of signs that their boyfriends felt the same way. When it appeared that they might not, the results could be traumatic, as in the following example.

I mentioned before, [boyfriend] is very much part of me, and the thought of waiting longer to see him is unbearable. I get even more angry [at him] when he tries to change the subject, then he hears my sniffles. After convincing him that I want to be alone for a week, I throw the phone against the wall in frustration. Doesn't he understand how much I need him? Doesn't he need me as much? I am disappointed and angry of how he seemed to have deserted me. I wander through the golf course behind my residence, bawling, thinking of all the bad things, feeling lost, friendless and devastated. I feel sorry for myself and sob even harder. [112F/D SE22].

Such powerful feelings were often further intensified by a longing for physical contact.

I'm stalling him like crazy. I'm also holding tears back like hell. I want him to hold me so much. I want him to be able to kiss away my pain. I want to cry!!! (in his arms). [156F/D SE17].

I phone [boyfriend] and gave him directions on how to get here. He's coming at 11:30 [AM]. I can't wait. I need a hug from someone who loves me!! [149F/D SE08].

Hug from [roommate]. Realize I miss physical touch. [112F/D SE11].

When contact did occur in person, it could be wonderful but so intense as to blot out all thought of academic work (evidence of cross-linkage will be explored in a later section [see below, **Theme 21**]). This price, however, was seen as more than worthwhile, for subjects uniformly thought of their boyfriend as one among only a handful of significant others they could call upon for support during periods of stress.

[Boyfriend] went home at 10:10 PM and I went to sleep. I'm glad he came but I didn't get much homework done. Oh, well. Have another three weeks to get caught up. [104F/D SE19].

This morning the marks were posted for my [course] exam. I got [less than 60%]. I knew I did badly but I didn't think I did that bad... By the time I got home, I was so upset that I called up [boyfriend] and just started to bawl. After that I phoned up my Mom and (still crying) told her that I was going to come home on Saturday. After my little "breakdown" I felt a bit better. I know I'm just getting overtired and I'm letting things upset me, but I can't help it. [119F/D OC18].

Turning from subjects with a romantic involvement to those with none, the following comments suggest that while such subjects were open to the possibility of a romantic relationship, neither were they distressed by its absence at this point in their lives.

[Being without a boyfriend] is one thing, at this point [in my life], its not the farthest thing from my mind. ... I'm sitting there going, well, if something comes along, something comes along. If not, it's not something I want to spend my time searching for. It's going to happen when it happens. In high school I always felt that the guys were really immature, so I was hoping that, you find the odd one that isn't and that's a decent kind of guy. Well, university, everyone's a little more mature, that will be alright. [161F/I SE15].

I never had boyfriends all through high school because I was always their friend. I have about five really close guy friends from our [residence] floor and three or four girlfriends. We all tend to hang around together. [105FF/I SE15].

I've got a lot of female friends, very close friends, but I've never had a steady girlfriend. [I've known] a lot of girls; one girl I'm close to I like to talk on the phone [with]. I call her and I've gone out with her a few times, as a friend. Sometimes I worry that I'm not worried enough about it. I don't know what it is. [101M/I SE28].

Given this openness to romantic involvement, it is hardly surprising that several subjects reported what might be called 'romantic encounters', although only one subject, a male (#130), established a romantic relationship during the first semester.

After a while [female 1] wanted to go home. Since she couldn't find [female 2], her roommate, I walked her home. Because she had forgotten her keys, we sat outside for a long time on a cold night. Under these circumstances I guess it's natural that we got quite intimate. I ended up staying the night (her roommate returned and then left). [101M/D OC06] I got up after a sleepless night, realizing that I had never taken my contacts out. I showered and breakfasted at [residence], [where female 1] lives. She walked me to my room to get my books, then to [building] where I kissed her goodbye. Things have happened so suddenly, it feels strange but very pleasant. [101M/D OC07].

I went to the College Day Dance and had a good time. I met a girl, [name], who I like a lot. I'm going to Club 404 with her tomorrow. [130M/D SE30]. I saw [female] today, we [are] going to go out tonight. I like her a lot so far. It's nice to have something else to think about besides University... I get along with her very well; I'm surprised. I don't get along with girls for very long (romantically, that is). [130M/D SE08].

Data with regard to those romantically involved confirm that boyfriends or girlfriends play a significant and on-going role in the lives of entering freshmen. Given that these others were geographically distant, they are reminiscent of Laing's (1969) notion of the "family ghost". In its original formulation, this notion had three components: (1) a long dead family member (2) whose memory was continually being

revived through conversation (3) such that their presence, in ghostly form, influenced on-going family transactions in the present. With respect to freshmen, it is the last two components that are relevant, since romantic others, though absent, continued to have a potent and on-going influence on those to whom they were attached at the university. More generally, the notion is intended to underscore the importance of on-going relationships to the experience and development of freshman students, irrespective of whether they are on-campus or not.

As for those who remained romantically uninvolved, this tends to call in question the usual stereotype which pictures adolescents as mad about members of the opposite sex and, consequently, continually in and out of romantic relationships. While this may or may not be true of others, it clearly was not true of a minority of study subjects; they got on well and appeared to suffer no adverse effects, either socially or academically.

Theme 21: Commitment versus Opportunity. The romantic relations of freshman students were, in several ways, often complicated: first, as in the present instances, they often involved 'distance relationships', that is, relationships among persons who live apart geographically; second, they required maintenance of a commitment to the other despite numerous opportunities to meet and interact with eligible others **in their immediate environment**; third, they required maintenance of a commitment to the other despite similar opportunities on the part of the other, that is, they meant coping with feelings of **jealousy**. The first difficulty is sufficiently complex to be dealt with separately, below (see **Theme 21**). The discussion which follows will focus on difficulties two and three.

Before proceeding, however, it should be noted that the occurrence of these difficulties varied as a function of the relationship in question. As in the following example, not all subjects experienced either problem.

I wanna see m'baby! It's so nice to hear his voice over the phone! Although in a lot of ways I'm glad he's not here (I'm not always around him here, so I can make my own [new] friends), I also really miss him. Sigh. Long-distance relationships are a bitch, but I sure wouldn't trade this one in for anything!!! I'm in love and I'm loved! Yeah! [SE10]. It's so nice to be in love while I'm here. Occasionally I wonder what it would be like going out with some of the guys here, but I know none could compare (to me) with [boyfriend], and

I know [boyfriend's] the one - the only one - I want. [SE14]. [Male] is incredibly attractive and soft-spoken! (Yeah, I know I'm in love with [boyfriend]! Does that mean I have to be blind?) [113F/D OC04].

This subject, however, was an exception. The more common experience was having to deal on a daily basis with the tension aroused by the conflict between commitment and opportunity, a situation often exacerbated by subjects' own lack of self-confidence.

I was worried [boyfriend] would be mad that I went to Down Child [a rock group] with [male]. I phoned [his place of work] to see if he was working. No. Oh, well. I spent the whole day worrying about it. Classes made it a bit better because I have so many. [149F/D SE15].

Well, I gave [male] his card and he seemed very happy about it. I'm feeling miserable though because I find myself liking him when I don't want to and I don't really know why I do. I feel like I'm right back in one of my old situation[s] where every guy I really like has absolutely no interest in me. Meanwhile, why should I be feeling this way when I'm going with a wonderful guy like [boyfriend]. Oh, I truly do hate the way I'm feeling right now. I'm anxious, nervous, trembling, confused and worst of all, I feel guilty and I haven't really done anything. [120F/D OC03].

At night there were toga parties all over campus. I dressed up with my friends and went to a dance at [residence]. There we met some more friends we knew from high school. One guy, [name], was pretty good-looking and I was talking with him for a little while. By the end of the night, he had made a pass at me. The scary thing was that I kind of liked it. [Boyfriend] is so far away that I feel removed from him, almost like I'm in another world. [Male] was right here, and it was so tempting. I ended up just running away from him and back to my residence. Right now, I just feel so confused. [119F/D SE10].

My boyfriend hasn't written me yet and I'm getting sort of depressed about that. I miss him. But another thing is I sort of like [male]. Not enough to break off with [boyfriend]. But [male] is depressed and needs someone right now. So I'm caught in the middle. [104F/D SE13].

Subject's ways of dealing with this tension varied. One approach involved gradual involvement in a potentially new relationship followed by a major struggle to prevent that happening.

Last night was really weird. [Male] kept stopping by, and acting really fidgety. He finally left and said his door was open if I wanted to come down. So I did. We were just lying on the bed and suddenly some things happened that were really different. Nothing really major, but it was still something. [SE20]. I'm having major guilt feelings about the way I feel about [male]. He's a great friend, but I know there's more than friendship between us. This morning, I slept in late, even though I was having psycho dreams that everyone I knew was in Kingston Penitentiary. Nobody seemed to mind, either. At around 10:30 [AM], all I could hear were [roommate and her boyfriend] kissing. I thought I was going to vomit, but I was OK. [123F/D SE18].

Another variation involved an empathetic response. By placing oneself in the place of the other, the boyfriend, and experiencing their potential pain, it became easier to avoid opportunity.

I know that if he saw me with another guy, it would probably crush his heart. I think I would feel the same way. I'm not sure. [104F/D SE08].

A third variation was to respond when opportunity knocked by carrying on an illicit or, more rarely, an open affair with another person. As the following comments illustrate, this choice was not without its complications, both social (eg., roommate relations) and academic (eg., fatigue)(see also Pittman, 1989).

Roommate and [male] have become boyfriend and girlfriend despite the fact that she already has a boyfriend and he already has a girlfriend. Anyway, he's really getting on my nerves because he acts as though I'm invading their privacy just by being in the room. I have lost some respect for [roommate] because I don't think much of people who cheat on their boyfriends [or] girlfriends; too many of my friends have been hurt that way. [147F/D OC31].

After we came back, I got an unexpected call from [male], a friend of mine who is really more than just a friend. I invited him over for the street dance and he wanted to come so we made arrangements to meet later on. I was glad he called, though I have mixed feelings every time I see him. The problem is that he means much more to me than he should... As I got to know [boyfriend] better, I began to fall in 'love' with him and I was very happy. Until the beginning of this summer. [Boyfriend] began having personal problems with his self-image, his beliefs, his Christian faith and his commitments. He stopped wanting to talk and became cynical and snide; at times even hostile. I didn't know how to react to this and was very upset by it all. Then halfway through [month] I received a note from male saying (...) that he had never stopped thinking about me. I was completely taken off guard... I suddenly remembered how much I had liked [male] and knew how much I enjoyed being with him. To make a long story short, I tried and am still trying to be "just friends" with [male], but I can't seem to do it.[144F/D SE09].

[Male and I] had to take the 12:45 AM bus and when we got back it was about 1:30 AM and his mother was still not home so we stayed up, made coffee and listened to music. We are very much attracted to each other physically, and this night was no exception. We got very close, and sexually things happened that shouldn't have. Afterwards I had very mixed feelings about it. [144F/D SE10].

[Boyfriend] called about 11:00 [PM], then male called at 11:30 [PM]. We talked about everything - our relationship situation, etc. - until 3:30 AM! It's long distance, so his phone bill is going to be fatal this month.... I got to sleep about 4:00 AM. I'm real confused and so is he. He's coming to see me tomorrow night to talk more. [144F/D SE20]. I dragged out of bed at 9:00 AM - no class until 11:00 thank God! I'm in a very lethargic mood today... We sat up and watched the Olympics for the rest of the evening and [male] left at 12:20 [AM] to catch his bus. I came back upstairs, and hit the sack at 1:00 AM or so. Tired, tired, tired! [144F/D SE21].

Finally, as for the romantic other back home, the opportunities available to him or her could be a major source of jealousy and other distressing feelings for subjects at the university.

I can't believe I'm hardly homesick at all. I miss [boyfriend] but he seems so far away, it's hard to ever think about him. [123F/D SE18]. After I talk to [boyfriend] I get very depressed. This girl at home has a crush on him, and I can't handle it at the moment. I cry for a few hours; for some reason I can't stop. [Male] comes up to see me and I feel a bit better. [123F/D SE19].

[Boyfriend] was supposed to call at 11:30 [PM] but didn't until 11:50 [PM]... He was out with [female] whom he used to like. He says not to worry. I'm worried sick... I'm sick, I want to sleep but I can't. I'm so worried he's going to dump me. I've cried for about an hour now. I'm going to try to sleep now. [147F/D SE22].

These data make clear that while romantic others could provide a crucial source of support (as in **Theme 19**), they also constituted a major source of demand, in time, and emotional and physical energy. Of course, such demand occurred concurrently with the variety of other demands already noted, thus compounding whatever coping problems subjects might already have had. Moreover, such relationships did not occur in a vacuum, either social or academic. As regards the former, romantic involements could cement the bonds between roommates or, as above, serve to weaken and undermine them. As regards the latter, romantic relations could enhance academic performance or, as above, impede efforts in that direction. Given these complications, one has to wonder whether they were really worth it after all. The following subject's answer probably says it best.

I think that boy-girl relationships are hazardous to school work. I would say to try to avoid them during school except that it is very difficult to do so because it is so easy and natural to develop a crush on someone. [134F/D SE19].

Theme 22: Relationship Maintenance. While this may well represent excellent advice, it was advice ignored by most subjects, including the subject in question. Rather, whatever the demands and complications, most subjects struggled valiantly to maintain their relationship with their romantic other back home. As a very limited literature on the subject makes clear, the maintenance of "long-distance" relationships is neither easy nor simple, and is at high risk of failure (Carpenter & Knox, 1986; Gerstel & Gross, 1982). In addition, Holt and Stone (1988) found it helpful to distinguish between relationship subtypes on the basis of cognitive style, with "visualizers" more satisfied and more likely to visit the other than "verbalizers".

This distinction was beyond the purview of the present study. However, diary ratings did differentiate couples on the basis of their stability. Thus, of subjects who were romantically involved on entry, just over

half (53%) were rated stable while the remainder (47%) were rated unstable. It was expected that these two groups would differ in two ways: they would use different means in the effort to maintain their romantic relationships; and, they would be differentially successful. Both the qualitative and the quantitative data supported these expectations.

Each of these relational groups will be examined in turn, beginning with those couples rated 'stable'. Recall that attention to **context markers**, critical in face-to-face relationships, will likely be even more important when confronted with the limits imposed by telephone contact. It is hardly surprising, then, to find that relations between stable couples, whether on the telephone or in person, were characterized by frequent conversations covering a wide array of topics.

At 7:45 [PM], [boyfriend] called. I told him about [going] on the Retreat, my feelings concerning [female], my success on my [course] quiz, the 2:45 [AM] fire drill and waking up at 8:00 [AM] for a 8:10 [AM] class. He mentioned that his work involves [...]. I told him to be careful. He said in reply to my earlier question of whether or not he was still my boyfriend that he was. We both can't wait [to see each other] next weekend. [134F/D SE23].

We talked about people in [Ontario city] and [Ontario city], the cottage, our respective courses, and who knows what all else! We also fooled around a bit (neither of us believe in premarital sex but we do believe in some other stuff. The man is a very good kisser, for instance.) [113F/D SE11].

Such efforts incurred a literal cost: in considerable long-distance telephone charges.

But...well, I told him one call a week. In fact, the three weeks I'll be in [Ontario city] for [course] no calls. I didn't want the bill to exceed \$300 total for semester 1. So, he'll have to do without talking to me. [156F/D OC30].

Our phone bill came in [for the month]... My bill was for \$117. Ahhh!! [149F/D NV07].

Additional costs involved the commitment of time to be together, especially in face-to-face contact.

At the least, this involved considerable juggling of work schedules. At the most, when the relationship was under stress, it could literally cost marks.

Spent three hours at the library and narrow my topic down to [...]. I want to get it done early because its due on the 15th of November and I'm going home on the 11th. I don't want to have to think about it. I've got it in my head that if I get it done, my reward is going home and seeing [boyfriend]. Silly, but I can't help it. [123F/D OC25].

Today I tried to get a lot of work done because [boyfriend] is coming up this weekend. I know I won't be able to do much when he is here. [119F/D OC13].

[Boyfriend] skipped two (two hour) classes for me today, just for me. Its the second time he skipped for me. I'm going to skip a Friday class for him one day and go home Thursday night after class. [156F/D OC14].

It was a horrible weekend. I couldn't write Saturday 'cause I was a mess. I'm still a mess. I've tried studying for my [course] mid-term....it's awful.... [Boyfriend] was starting to drink too much and I kept telling him that I wasn't getting to impressed and he should stop. He didn't. Suddenly, he started to cry. He ran into the bathroom. I freaked out. [Male] went and talked to him. They went for a walk. [Boyfriend] got pretty violent. I stayed here and cried while [female] and [roommate] consoled me. [Boyfriend] phoned and said he wasn't sure whether he could come back tonight. That made me throw up. At around midnight he came in. Fell down on my bed, told me he was sorry and fell asleep. I phoned [male] and [male] told me [boyfriend] feels worthless. He doesn't feel he's worthy of me. I cried a lot... I just held him all night long. Telling him that I loved him and that he was my baby. I'm so shaken up by this, I'm beyond words... I can't study [course]. I slept today for about four hours. I felt a little better after that, but still very exhausted. [149F/D OC22/23]. I went into my [course] midterm very calm. I knew five out of 32 questions. I came back to the residence and slept. [149F/D OC24].

As the final comment suggests, even stable relationships were not without episodic difficulties. This was especially true as regards the need to continually maintain context markers, symbolized by several subjects in terms of the apparent erosion of the sense of intimate mutual knowledge. In some cases, this was confounded by male ignorance of female sensibilities.

I was bored so I called [boyfriend]. We talked. He mentioned that he went to a bar last night and that his eyes popped out when he saw the other girls. I started to cry. I told him that I didn't mind if he looked at other girls just as long as he didn't tell me about it. I don't get bug eyes because of the guys around here. [134F/D SE17].

[Female] waits on us. After I go to [boyfriend's] where we talk with his family. Later, we have a very emotional (for me) fight. Maybe the stress of everything (school) is getting to me but I could not stop crying. I was mainly upset that he didn't seem to want to come see me - even though I know he does. We made up though, but it took me a while to calm down. It's just that I miss him so much. [123F/D OC08].

I think we will actually [make it]. We've made it this far. It hasn't been easy. It's really hard being separated from somebody for that long because it means that whenever you see them you then have to relearn who they are. Not when you're seeing each other every week but certainly (pause) we went about six weeks at one point, and when I first saw him it was like, "Hi! Yeah, I remember you! You're the guy I'm going out with!?" That sort of thing. I think we're going to last because there is something incredibly strong between us. [113F/I SE15].

I phoned [boyfriend] for a few seconds to apologize for crying so much [the other day] and he said he didn't mind 'cos girls are supposed to do that. He can be so cute when he's being stereotypical. He really knows nothing about females or the way they work. [149F/D OC02].

Compensation for these difficulties was clearly provided by the sense of intimacy and sharing which, in the mind of subjects, could only be achieved through the romantic other. However, in some cases, evidence of mutual growth and development also came to light, as in the case of subject #113 who discovered religious faith.

Around about the end of January or so I asked [boyfriend] if I could go to church with him. He sort of looked at me and went, "Ah huh! Why do you want to come?" Apparently I really surprised him at that point. My idea then was, it was mostly because I was very much in love with this guy, and it meant a lot to him but I wanted to understand it more, so I could understand him a bit more. The first time I was [in church] I was so uncomfortable it wasn't funny. I was sitting there going, "What am I doing here!?" Despite that something made me ask him if I could go back with him a second time. The second time that I went God revealed Himself to me. He showed me that He existed. And at that point I didn't know exactly what I was going to do. I was really confused at that point. I was sort of going, "Well, God exists. What do I do about it?" Because it was sort of, OK, I can stay with my own beliefs, and believe in nature and that sort of thing. Or I can look around at this Christianity stuff a bit more and see what there is there. But whatever I do I can't deny that God exists anymore. Once I had realized that it was sort of, that I ended up becoming a Christian. I never feel alone anymore, even if I'm alone, and also the other thing I found, I know a number of my friends are sort of the opinion that I converted because of [boyfriend]. That's not true at all. In the first place, I wouldn't make a mockery of his beliefs by doing that, and in the second place, that's just not the way I operate. I have noticed that we are a lot stronger as a couple because there's a link between our love and God's love and all three of us. [113F/I SE15].

The Lord told me to go read through some of the letters [boyfriend] has given me. I got to one where it said, "It scares me to think of any part of my life without you." As I read this, I started crying and kept on doing so for about 10 minutes. Such a good cry, and such peace and happiness from it. Thank you, Father! [113F/D OC01].

Stable relationships, then, were characterized by frequent contact covering an array of topics, good communication, the possibility of individual development, and low to moderate variation. Such relationships stood in sharp contrast to unstable relations that involve the opposite attributes, including infrequent or irregular contact over a narrow range of topics, poor communication, no possibility of individual development, and extremely high variation. In particular, female subjects called attention to **three** behaviors on the part of their male partners that were potentially fatal to their relationship: infrequent contact; avoidance of subject's university experience; and, the apparent inability to perceive or confront the fact that their relationship was deteriorating badly. The following comments illustrate all three processes as well as subject's reluctance to break off despite blatant dissatisfaction with the relationship.

[Boyfriend] was really nice, told me I looked great, said he would call me Saturday, and of course never did. I think I should just give up on it. It is hard though when you've cared about someone for so long. [154F/D NV04].

I guess being away from [boyfriend] for such a length of time and only hearing from him occasionally is becoming a strain on me. I hope I can sort things out because I don't want to lose what means so much to me. Even if [boyfriend] and I do break up I still want to have him as a friend but I'm really afraid that that won't happen. The other thing is I get along so well with his mother and I'd hate that changed. I hate this confusion. It's so frustrating. [120F/D SE30]

It's depressing too that we're becoming one of the statistics I learned at START [re the risk of breakup] which neither of us felt would happen. Anyone else I know who has a boyfriend somewhere else is fine so that bugs me too. But what I hate most is these feelings of hurt and anger building up inside. [120F/D NV11].

[Boyfriend] is really beginning to get on my nerves. He has no interest whatever in meeting any of the friends I have made [at the university]. He wants to organize all my free time doing special things with him (ie., movies, seeing his family, his friends, etc.). Whenever I suggest going to The Keg or to The Boo Bar or Derk's he says he "doesn't want to go to gay places like that!" Jerk! Anyhow, I think it's just that he's scared of meeting people because he knows no one on campus except me! [139F/D SE21].

[Boyfriend] is being secretive which is strange because we've always been open with each other. He really confuses me right now. I also feel like he is putting pressure on me. He once said he wants things to always stay the same between us. But I feel like things have to change...I don't want to lose [boyfriend]. We were meant for each other and someday I hope to marry him. But I'm beginning to feel that I might lose him if we can't work our problems out. [139F/D SE27].

These on-going problems place the unstable relationships at considerable risk. Diary ratings show that four relationships broke up permanently while an additional two did so temporarily during semester 1. Counting permanent break-ups only, this represents 19% of all couples involved in a romantic relationship. However, virtually all disrupted relationships came from the unstable category. This means that 43% of unstable relationships dissolved permanently; including temporary separations yields the fact that 71% of unstable relationships were disrupted in one form or another during semester 1.²⁹ These data also make

²⁹ Among the males, of the two who became involved with a woman on arrival at the university, one (#130) established a stable relationship (much to his astonishment) while the other (#101) had a brief encounter which quickly (and painfully) dissolved. The following comment sums up his feelings close to the end: I sat through over three hours worth of presentations. During this time my mind wandered, thinking of my dying relationship. I resolved to call [name] within the next few days and try to understand what is going on... I played nerf basketball with [male] and got more and more angry about the "two-faced bitch." It felt good to talk like this about a girl who'd hurt you with a friend. I ended the evening by removing her name from my phone book with liquid paper. [101M/D NV08].

clear that the decision to break off these relationships was taken by the female partner and was a deliberate one, arrived at after much thought and heartache; it was seldom impulsive.

The following comments provide a glimpse of what it felt like to finally end these unstable relationships and of the toll such an action took, both psychological as well as academic.

Another fight with [boyfriend]. He got jealous of me spending time with my girlfriends. Other tests of patience give me incentive to break up with him, loved him still, but stress and worry taking toll on my school concentration. [112F/D OC09]. [Boyfriend] and I break up. I am devastated. I want it but I don't. I need the security but it's been too difficult to keep up (not to mention the [money] for phone bills). [112F/D OC14].

[Boyfriend] called. He's had a really lousy time in [Ontario city]. And to top it all off I broke off with him. I know it won't work anymore. Just another person to worry about. Life really sucks now. I feel like a total bag of shit. Towards [boyfriend], I know I've hurt him but it's for the best. Cried myself to sleep. Love sucks. Love hurts. I don't think I'm going to fall in love for a while. [104F/D OC24].

[Boyfriend] called to ask when I was coming home. We didn't talk for long because there was this big silence on the phone. I couldn't think of anything to tell him. So we made small talk and repeated a lot of things over and over. It's strange how fast two people can grow apart like this. Well, maybe its me; he still thinks everything is fine. [133F/D SE27]. At home I studied for a while but I couldn't concentrate. I came down with a really bad cough and I had a fever, too. When [boyfriend] phoned I was not in a very good mood. He wanted to come over and he kept insisting. So I said okay but I was not pleased. When he arrived four hours late with no reasonable excuse, something in my mind just snapped. Right there and then I broke up with him and I felt very relieved. [Boyfriend] was quite upset because for him it came out of the blue. I went to bed wondering if I did the right thing. I think I was just looking for a reason because I haven't felt good about this relationship for a while. [133F/D OC08].

While traumatic, these subjects at least had some relief from the continual agony of a dying relationship. No so those subjects whose relationships went through a series of disruptions. Consider the case of #144, noting, if nothing else, the incredible time and energy this highly variable relationship demanded.

I was in tears for a couple [of] minutes [after meeting him] because after not seeing [boyfriend] for a month and then his being horrible for the two months previous, suddenly everything was back to normal, just the way it used to be! Life can really throw some nasty turns at you - now I'm stuck between the two most wonderful guys in existence and I don't know what to do! Well, I do - I have to cool it with [other male] but it's such a hard thing to do! [144F/D SE25].

I called [boyfriend] and we talked for an hour. Great for my phone bill, but it was important. We finally got the truth out in the open that the relationship just isn't working, and that it's ridiculous to keep calling ourselves boyfriend-girlfriend when we barely ever even speak. We didn't completely resolve it and he said he'd call back on the weekend.

When I hung up the phone I had a good cry; partly out of relief, partly frustration and partly sadness that it's come to an end. I tried to do some homework but I couldn't concentrate at all. [144F/D OC13].

Then the phone rang again - it was [boyfriend] again - good thing [roommate] had previously decided to camp out in the lounge overnight with some others! It was now 2:30 AM and this time we talked for 3 hours. I got extremely upset on the phone, crying and so on - and so did [boyfriend]... I couldn't really sleep ([other male] had conked out hours ago) for another hour, but at 5:30 [AM] my eyes started to droop so I climbed onto the bed beside [other male] and fell asleep. [144F/D OC14].

I got back [to my room] about 9:30 [PM] and was studying until 11:00 [PM], when [boyfriend] called. I got a double shock because I was surprised to hear from him; and his voice was about gone - he had a very bad cold and sounded terrible - gravely and hoarse. He said he really wanted to see me and did I possibly have time? He sounded so upset I just said "of course".... He arrived just after 12:00 and we jumped in the car and went for a drive. He really let loose - he had tears running down his face and he was "hiccupping" - sobbing as he tried to talk. We stopped in a parking lot and talked for 2 hours. [144F/D OC16].

I got back [to my room] at 1:30 [AM] and found a message to call [other male], so I did. I told him what had happened and we ended up talking until 4:30 [AM]. It was a depressing conversation and it just went around in circles... At 5:00 AM I hit the sack. [144F/D OC17].

[Course] was extremely difficult to stay awake in and I barely made it through the class. [144F/D OC18].

After I talked to [boyfriend] I called [other male] back and I sat out in the hallway and talked on the phone until 3:00 AM. [144F/D OC25].

I finally managed to convince [boyfriend] that everything was mostly OK and we came back to the school... We broke up again. We were both in tears. We came back to my room and talked some more... At 4:00 AM we finally fell asleep - well, I did, I was so tired my body wouldn't let me stay awake. [144F/D OC27]. We woke up about 9:00 [AM], but neither of us felt like moving too far. We lay and talked for 3 hours and, since we could talk much more rationally this morning than we could last night, we were able to figure out where we're at. We agreed to get back together again - and I think that's what I want. Hopefully this weekend will reinforce that decision. It won't be easy to give [other male] up and it also won't be nice, in fact it's kind of nasty, but I have to. [144F/D OC28].

These data make **three** things abundantly clear. First, it makes little sense to treat entering students as tabula rasa. Rather, they have very specific and highly consequential past lives and that history clearly influences how they behave in the present, while on campus. A case in point concerns the presence of a romantic involvement in general, and the extent to which that involvement was stable or unstable in particular.

Second, the "ghost"-like presence of boyfriends or girlfriends was only too apparent. Though they lived off-campus, even hundreds of kilometers away, these romantic others were very much present on campus through their direct and palpable influence upon their student-partners.

Finally, these data again call attention to the importance of cross-linkage. Repeatedly, subjects spoke of the poor concentration, anxiety and fatigue **directly associated with their romantic involvement**. On the one hand, it is not unreasonable to expect that the demands of such involvement **could** contribute to their academic performance.³⁰ On the other, the existence and influence of such involvements cannot be gainsaid. When speaking of programming which is responsive to the **whole student**, such involvements are clearly part of that 'whole' and thus need to be taken into account.

Discussion

There are **two** senses in which understanding the romantic involvements of freshman students is important. First, it helps emphasize the **social character** of the lived experience of freshman students. Romantic others were central members of freshman peer networks; they served an important psychological function in terms of student self-esteem, security and well-being. They also invariably constituted a source of demand, for romantic relationships, as we have seen, required enormous effort to maintain. This was true both in terms of the dynamics of the relationship as well as the need to resist external opportunities made available through the continual presence of an array of eligible others, and irrespective of the relationship's degree of stability. Well functioning relationships involved frequent, albeit it satisfying, interaction. Poorly functioning relations involved relatively infrequent but often highly intense interaction, with intervening intervals of inaction marred by psychological distress.

To complicate matters, romantic partners seldom came alone. Rather, both partners brought with them their own family members and friends. Each of these others could not only influence the course of the

³⁰ Despite her involvement in a stable relationship, #113 ended her first semester down two grade points from her entering average of 'A'. By contrast, #144, involved in an unstable relationship, managed to sustain her entering 'B'.

relationship, but, at different times, each might need to be taken into account by one or both of the partners. Similarly, despite their geographic distance, romantic others impacted on the concurrent relations of student partners. While the most obvious peer to be affected was the roommate of the student partner - recall the hapless roommate of #144 consigned (one suspects frequently) to the lounge - presumably other peer relations (eg., other new friends) would not be exempt.

In turn, this web of social relations calls attention to the second reason such data are important, namely, that they highlight the chronic daily *tension* between student social and academic concerns. As we have seen, the academic demands of university were substantial, and required regular, disciplined attention if they were to be met. However, romantic involvements were associated had similar requirements; certainly, that was the way student partners appeared to perceive their romantic involvements. Given that there is a finite amount of time in which both sets of demands are to be met, the result was an unavoidable compromise, at times favoring the academic, at other times favoring the romantic. But they were not equal; when a choice had to be made between them (say, during exam time), it was the commitment to the romantic partner that was typically given priority, whatever the academic "cost".

The upshot of this tension is *twofold*: first, romantic involvements must be seen as a contributing factor - sometimes direct, more often indirect - in understanding freshman academic performance; and, second, coping with the dual demands of romance and academia give new meaning to phrases such as 'transitional stress' or 'culture shock'.

Subdomain: FAMILY MEMBERS

Theme 23: Salience of Family Relationships. In a recent review (Benjamin, 1988b), it was necessary to explore five separate literatures in order to assemble an overview of the salience of family relations to the development of university students. The sad fact is that while there is considerable empirical data available on the topic, these findings are underrepresented in the higher education literature. At the risk of some oversimplification, the thrust of these data in the present context may be summarized as follows: (1)

parental (and to a lesser extent sibling) influence on their student offspring remains potent and on-going throughout the college years (see Elson, 1984; Silber et al., 1966), although it is greatest in the freshman year; (2) such influence extends across a wide range of dimensions, from the decision to attend university to sexuality and alcohol use to university adjustment (see Weissman et al., 1989; Kenny, 1987); and (3) comparing parents and peers in terms of influence is often misleading since their relative influence will vary across dimensions, with parents more influential in some cases, peers more influential in others.

Guided by these considerations, relations between study subjects and their family members were assessed in two ways. First, as noted in the method section, all subjects completed FACES III. Second, diary and interview exemplars were assembled across a range of topics in an effort to get some sense of the character and salience of relations between subjects and their family members, especially their parents. Below, the results from each of these sources is reported in sequence.

Turning first to the FACES results, three facets of the instrument deserve mention in order to avoid misinterpretation. First, FACES is not a diagnostic instrument such that subject scores are not to be interpreted in terms of any set of diagnostic categories, such as those found in DSMIII. Second, the instrument assesses subjects in terms of their position on two dimensions of family relating, cohesion (extending from enmeshed to disengaged) and adaptability (extending from flexible to rigid). The intersection of these two dimensions translates into a 16-fold typology of family types. Third, subject's family functioning is described in terms of 'distance' from the point of intersection, rather like a shooting target. Those closest to the center, the bullseye, are "balanced" and thus least likely to display symptomatology under stress. Those somewhat further out are in the "mid-range" and thus somewhat vulnerable to stress-induced dysfunction, while those farthest out are "extreme", and so most vulnerable to stress. However, irrespective of their position, all family members may still score within the 'normal' range on existing diagnostic tests.

Thus, FACES scores may be reported in two ways: in terms of the 'distance' from the centre and in terms of the quadrant produced by the intersection of the two dimensions. As regards the former, 29% scored in the "balanced" range, 42% in the "mid-range" range, and 29% in the "extreme" range. In other words, nearly three quarters came from well-functioning families that were unlikely to display symptoms in

the face of stress. As regards the latter, 50% of subject scores were "high" in adaptability and "high" in cohesion compared to 33% who were "low", "low", 8% who were "low", "high" and 8% who were "high", "low". Put differently, study subjects essentially broke into two main groups. The single largest proportion came from families that were quite close (some excessively so) and quite flexible (some chaotically so). The next largest proportion were from families whose members were quite distant from each other (some very distant) and also quite rigid (some very rigid).

Additional data derived from the diary ratings. This showed that 79% of subjects were rated as feeling "close" to their parents.

As usual, these findings were extensively qualified by diary and interview comments. A good place to begin is with subject replies to two interview probes, the first concerning subject's relations with their parents, the second concerning subject's perceptions of their parents relations with each other, that is, their marital relationship. As would be expected from the FACES data, subject's response to the first question showed that, despite demographic comparability, subject's relationship with their parents varied widely. In the following comments, note, first, that most subjects were closest to their mothers, with their fathers pictured as rather distant figures who were perceived as either amusing or intimidating; and, second, that some subjects were quite distant from both parents.

Fathers

My father. I love my father! I would die for Dad! He's great. He doesn't put a lot of pressure on me to do things he wants. He really understands what I'm going through even though we don't have to talk a lot. He lets me make my own decisions. He's always giving me money, "Oh, here, you might need a little extra something." He used to travel a lot so when I was growing up I never got to see him a lot. But in the past couple of years, as I've been getting older, going out with guys and stuff like that, we've become a lot more closer. This year we've become really close because... my mother and I don't get along actually. [139F/I SE15].

Well, I love my Dad, I really do and I was always his little girl. But, the thing about my Dad is that he is the manager of [...] in [Ontario city] and there are times that whenever there was a family crisis, whenever there was a situation that needed communication, whenever there was something that needed to be worked out, it seemed that he never really got involved in that and it was just my brother and me and my Mom. My Dad puts a lot of distance between my brother and him, they don't get along at all. I was really angry at him for a long time for being so mean to my brother but he has a hard time understanding people. He sees things in black and white. He is a compassionate man but he can't really show his feelings so a lot of times I was really angry at him because of that. I guess I have

just learned to let him have his distance away from the family crisis and my Mom and my brother and I just try to work it out. [118F/I SE15].

With my Dad, if there's something wrong, you just say, "Ok, you're right." and you drop it. That's the end of it. My father has very strong old-country feelings... So if you get in an argument with him you just say fine, you're right and leave it at that. He just ends up calling you all sorts of names - he can just go storming out of the house if he gets mad. On the drive home from [Ontario city] when he brought me back Monday morning I wanted to avoid the whole subject because I was afraid he'd drop me on the side of the 401 [highway] and make me walk the rest of the way back [to the university]. [148F/I SE15].

Mothers

[My relationship with my mother] has always been on really rocky ground. Like since I can remember. But it seems like in the last year and a half I just felt the need [to get closer to her]... It has been really difficult but we've found some sort of resolution... Now I find that I can go to her pretty well about anything and she understands. I never realized that before. I always thought that all she wants to do is, I don't know, punish me or whatever. I guess it comes with maturity or whatever and I know now that there is closeness between us and I can talk to her about anything and I will. She is a problem solver I guess in a lot of my situations. [118F/I SE15].

[My mother and I have] always been really close. When Mom and [biological father, now divorced] had a lot of troubles over a lot of years before she actually said, "No, I'm sorry, I can't hack this anymore, goodbye." She never really told me about that, that much, because she wanted my relationship with [father] to last and it has. But, apart from that, we talk about just about everything. [113F/I SE15].

My Dad leaves early in the morning for work and he comes home late in the evening, so we don't see him all that often. My Mom is there. She kind of controls us, in the way that we can basically go and do whatever we want to. But there was always someone there worried about us. She always made sure she knew where we were going and with whom. She did control our activities, gave us boundaries which made us more responsible for what we were doing. [148F/I SE15].

Parents

I think [my parents and I] appreciate each other a lot more. My best friend's brother died about a month ago and it just kind of made us all realize what would happen if it was one of ours. It just brings you back to reality and I think we all appreciate each other. It's like when I phone now, they're like, "How's it going?" It's a nice feeling because I know that they'll always be there for me. [115F/I SE27].

It's gotten better in the last few years. We really get along, but when it comes to something really important, I don't really discuss important issues with [my parents]. If I do have a problem... I'll talk to one of my sisters usually. My parents are just sort of there, they take care of us and everything, but they don't seem to get involved too much in what we're doing except how we're doing in school... It's been like this since we were kids so we don't think too much about it though. If I have a problem I go to my younger sister. I get along with my older sister, but we get along better if we don't see each other as much... [My younger

sister and I] have a lot in common, we think similarly. She understands me better than my older sister would. [148F/I SE15].

These data were generally consistent with FACES categories. Some subjects were members of close families characterized by flexible boundaries between parents and children. Others belonged to separated families with boundaries that were clear but rigid. Further, among the latter, distance from parents appeared to promote coalition formation among the siblings, that is, a close relationship among the two (or more) of the siblings *against* the parents.

In accord with this formulation was another variation in which one child in the family was especially favored by one or both parents (see Dickerson et al., 1980), thus promoting separation within the family system.

[My parents] always seemed to favour [my sister] because she was always the cute little angel and she sort of conformed to what they wanted whereas I never did... I was sort of the rebel... For a while, I was always the sporty type, I played a lot of sports, had a lot of injuries... But [sister] never did any of that. She always stayed home and studied whereas I didn't. Played sports and got hurt. Had a good time! [139F/I SE15].

Mainly because I am a girl, there was that inequality thing and that really gets to me a lot, but yeah we were treated differently. [My brother] always seemed to be the more responsible one and I was always the baby. [118F/I SE15].

The result was to encourage different relationships among the siblings as a function of family type. In close, flexible families, sibling relations were similarly affectionate. In separate, rigid families, what closeness that did exist was colored by underlying hostility. The following comments illustrate such variation.

Well, I consider my brothers, especially my brother who's closest to me in age, as my best friend. Certainly my brother [name] who's closer to me in age, he's [...] years older than me, I consider him my best friend. And I also consider my parents as very close. I have a lot of respect for them... I share most things with them, I share more with my brothers than I do with my parents, in some senses, but I think generally [the family's] pretty open. [101M/I SE28].

At times [my relationship with my older brother] was very trying. I always found myself in the position where I always looked up to him. I mean he was my mentor, he was just the shining sun in my life... I mean, he always had better grades than me in school and he always did more things in his life than me. I was really jealous of him for a long time. He always seemed to get more attention... he was a lot closer to my mother... As we grew older, that, I don't know, seemed to lessen and lessen... Especially since he moved out of the house. [118F/I SE15].

Yet another indication of family variation concerned subjects perception of their parent's marital relationship. Most subjects, especially those in close, flexible families, had, as expected (Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 1983), only a fuzzy sense of what that relationship was like. A minority, typically those in separate, rigid families, were acutely aware of their parent's relationship, particularly as regards tension and conflict.

I have never really thought about my parent's relationship with each other. My Dad verbally abuses my Mom a lot and he blames my Mom for being too compassionate and sometimes I picture my Dad as being a German Nazi ... I think he is jealous because of the closeness my Mom has to us and he has the distance. But as far as their relationship towards each other, they do love each other, and I know that because they have been together for [more than 20 years] now and I know they must love each other. [118F/I SE15].

[My father] has just changed over the years. He used to be easy to get along with. But he expects Mom to cook for him all the time, he expects her to do this and that and to do the work around the house. He just sits down and watches TV. [105F/I SE15].

I'd say they're fairly, uh, reasonably close. They do talk a lot. A lot of times I detect some tension with my Mom... She [slams doors] quite often, she gets in a huff because she likes to have things her own way and Dad's like, you know, "Do what you want and I'm going to do what I want." [139F/I SE15].

Finally, yet another indicator of family variation concerned the willingness of parents and children to talk frankly with each other about emotionally charged topics such as sex and alcohol. Here again, subjects accounts varied in accord with FACES categories. Those in close, flexible families spoke of open communication; those in separate, rigid families spoke of taboos,³¹ prohibitions, and general discomfort with such topics.

I think I could talk to [my parents] both at the same time about quite a few subjects. The subject of sex, I don't think (pause). Dad and I sort of talk about it, but it's the sort of subject that we avoid 'cause he gets very uncomfortable talking about something like that. I could talk to my mother, but she would definitely think that it was me out sleeping with every guy in the world, type sort of thing. Issues such as drinking and drugs, drinking and driving, stuff like that, I can talk to my parents. [139F/I SE15].

Yeah, I've always talked to my Mom about things like that. She's always told me about what her idea is but still, "Well, you know it's your life [subject], and you're going to have to

³¹ A special case concerns one subject who was sexually abused by her father: [Sexuality's] a weird issue. 'Cause my father has abused me sexually. And that's put a weird twist to everything... [In high school] I wasn't asking [I wonder what it's like] questions. I was asking different questions. I'm still, I guess we can talk about it. We're a lot more open in the last little while. [114F/I SE19].

make decisions but this is what I did." ... My father is a very closed person - he can't open up and as a result all three are very close to our mother.... [119F/I SE15].

[My mother's] also basically told me that although of course its my decision, (pause) how did she put it? She would like to see me have sex with somebody before I get married. Her feeling about that is that by enshrining it in marriage you place too much importance on it. I can see the point there, but the problem is that most of my exposure to premarital sex [in high school] is the opposite - it's cheapening it. [113F/I SE15].

[Talk with my mother] about sex, definitely not. I don't feel comfortable talking to her about sex 'cause she has never brought up the subject with me... [My father's attitude toward alcohol is] very negative, extremely negative... He is very against it... As far as drugs goes, anyone who does drugs in their opinion is a bum and is no good and they are going to get addicted and become hobo's and live on the streets kind of thing. [169F/I SE15].

Taken together, these data were not only consistent with FACES categories, but also (1) suggested a way to reconcile FACES and diary rating that would not otherwise be apparent, and (2) predicted variation across subjects in the salience they attach to family members. Thus, subject families appeared to vary on a continuum.

At one extreme were those families that were extremely close and extremely flexible. Such families were likely to involve uniform closeness among all family members. Communication was open across a range of topics, but with some blurring concerning what was appropriate for an adult and what for a child. Child independence, however, was likely to be quite low, with children accustomed to seeking assistance from parents in decision-making across a range of dimensions. In the context of university, such dynamics were likely to translate into **fragile independence** and extreme homesickness. Family members were seen as having inordinate salience.

In the centre were two groups of families. Close flexible families were likely to involve close relations between parents and children coupled with long-standing respect for child independence. Communication was typically open and covered a range of topics. In the university context, these dynamics translated into **affectionate independence** and low to moderate homesickness. Family members had high to moderate salience.

In contrast, separate rigid families were likely to involve guarded, rather tense relations between parents and children, with female children typically much closer to mothers than father. Among such

children, relative independence had been achieved before entry into university and was coupled with sibling coalitions. In the university context, this was likely to translate into **hostile independence** and low homesickness. The salience of family members fluctuated from moderate to low.

Finally, at the other extreme were families characterized by extreme separatenss and rigidity. Here, distance between family members, especially between parents and children, was expected. Such relations also frequently involved either tension and conflict or indifference. Independence had been achieved by children long before they enter university. In the university context, such dynamics translated into **pervasive independence** coupled with no homesickness whatever. Family members had little or no salience.

The following comments about salience and homesickness were consistent with this formulation.

Fragile Independence

I thought about this weekend all day long. I know I maybe should stay [at the university], but all week long I have had more and more tension building inside me. I need to go home and relax. I called Mom from the pay phone (still can't use mine) and told her to phone my room. She did and I had a good cry! She is coming to pick me up tomorrow at 4:30 [PM]. I feel better already. [154F/D SE08]. I am so glad to be home! SO GLAD!! [154F/D SE09].

Then I went for a walk and talk with Dad. He has a lot of smart things to say to me, and he helps me to put things into perspective. I already have a really good talking relationship with my Mom; but its nice to be developing one with Dad. Not only do I go to him. He comes to me, he asks me for advice or an opinion. I like the respect he gives me and I end up giving him more. [154F/D Se18].

Affectionate Independence

My parents got here with lots of goodies for me, which was great. We went to dinner. They gave me the old 'try your best, we're proud of you' speech. They know I'm homesick so they were trying to make me feel better. It only made me worse. [117F/D OC23].

The Thanksgiving weekend has been very purgative for her. Was tense and uptight at the beginning. Spent hours the first day weeping copiously, not for any particular reason; she thinks it was just the general tension and it was so good to be home where she could be herself. She was ashamed about snapping and being bad tempered, but once the crying had left her "washed out" and relaxed, she was able to have a really enjoyable family weekend. [buddy of 169F/I OC13].

My Mom called, and I talked to her for quite a long time... I was glad to hear from her and it was good to talk to her, but I was surprised that she was wanting me to come home so soon. I miss my family, of course, but I'm having a great time here and I'm not ready to go home just yet. [144F/D SE10]. The homesickness though seems to be going in the opposite way for me because I'm more homesick [now than before]. Probably the desire to be independent and on my own for awhile, which was really strong [at first], and I was

really enjoying it for awhile. Now I'm starting to really appreciate my family. Kind of difficult to describe. Just the things that we used to do, when I used to beat up on my brother. Just the things that sisters and brothers do. And talking to my Mom and Dad. [144F/I NV21].

[Subject] doesn't feel right if she doesn't call home almost daily. This is normal for her as she is very close to her family. She used to call collect - now she just calls and then borrows money from home when the bill comes in. [buddy of 126F/I OC24].

Hostile Independence

When I said goodbye to my parents, I cried a little bit. I think I will miss them a little bit but I'm well prepared to go. [104F/D SE05].

Called home. I was so excited about talking to my parents but when they got on the phone, they couldn't have cared much less who they were talking to. I suddenly had this realization that I'm not all that important to them. For now, I've decided not to call them unless I'm sick or something like that. [147F/D SE08].

The people below us shut their music off and 5 minutes later the ones across from us turned their's on even louder. I had a headache and all I wanted to do was rest. After a full three and a half hours of listening to this shit, I couldn't take it anymore. I really felt awful. I decided to call my Mom and see if she could come and get me. I felt like a baby, like I was running home to my parents just because I was faced with a major problem. Anyway I couldn't have cared less about what other people would think, I was just glad to be going home. [147F/D SE14].

Pervasive Independence

I [took off for the United States] last [date], went to [state] with a friend, drove there. We said, "What should we do today?" It was fun. And we came back and [my parents] said, "You know, something could have happened", well, it didn't. They said, "Next time, tell me" and I say, "But you'd only worry" but they say, "We'd rather know where you are, just in case." But I generally don't tell them much... [M]y Dad's not really involved 'cause he's not around a lot. Or when he is, he's busy. [130M/I SE21].

Finally, while on the topic of salience, a word is in order about non-human family members, specifically, pets. While generally ignored in the literature, a minority of subjects accorded them special mention, suggesting that their absence had a direct bearing on both their adjustment to university as well as their level of homesickness.

Saying goodbye to [name 1] and [name 2] was hard (they're my cats), but saying goodbye to Mum wasn't. I know I can talk to Mum and I know she won't forget about me. But cats, well, you have to be around them. I wonder how I'll sleep in residence without [name 1] curled up in my legs every night? [113F/D SE06].

My parents, sister and grandmother came to visit me... They told me all about [name] (my cat) and [name] (my dog); I can hardly wait to go home next weekend and see them. [147F/D SE11].

Coming home, Mom had made one of my favorite dinners... I also saw my dogs, [name and name], who I'd missed as much as anyone, if not more. I have acquaintances and friends to joke around with; the food is OK and if I want, I could eat out (for a few nights); if I had personal trouble I could phone home; but there are no substitutes for my dogs who wag their tails when they see me and lick my face and who I can pet and talk to for hours. (That sounds like a six-year old talking, doesn't it?) [151M/D SE17].

These data support four inferences. First, the importance of family relations to pre-entry freshman student development cannot be overemphasized. While peers too played a role, the influence of the family appeared predominant. In this sense, the family determined who these students were, including a range of personality attributes, their social self-esteem as well as their values, expectations and attitudes. While their post-entry behavior was influenced by others - typically peers - such influence took time to have an effect and this influence was complicated by on-going family involvement. In short, boyfriends were not the only "family ghosts" wandering the campus; they were joined by a sizable number of family members.³²

Second, not only was student involvement with family on-going, but such involvement directly affected student personal and social adjustment, at least during the first semester. Such effects, however, were mediated by family type, specifically variation in family interaction processes as reflected in the FACES dimensions of adaptability and cohesion. Using homesickness and independence as indices of personal adjustment, both variables appeared to vary directly as a function of family closeness; the closer the family, the more their offspring were likely to experience distress with respect to both homesickness and independence and, concomitantly, the more time they required to fully adjust to university life. As for social processes, variation in family processes appeared strikingly reminiscent of variation in relations with both friends and romantic others. While merely an impression for the moment, this assertion will be examined explicitly in a later section (see below, *Interaction Effects*).

Third, again, as a function of family type, the salience of family relations varied across entering freshmen. Among study subjects, the majority accorded family members high salience and, concomitantly, were rated as feeling "close" to them. However, detailed inspection of subject's comments revealed a further

³² While this discussion is restricted to members of the immediate family, subject comments include reference to the extended kin, including grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins.

qualification, specifically, that the meaning of "close" varied as a function of affective sign. For some subjects, "close" referred to feelings of affection, mutual respect, and warmth. For others, "close" had decidedly ambivalent connotations, combining feelings of attachment, anger, distance and resentment. In turn, such differences helped account for the on-going character of parent-student involvement, including, for example, the frequency of contact (both by telephone and in person)³³ as well as the extent to which such contact served to buffer or exacerbate transitional stress: parent-student interaction that was supportive, sensitive and affirming likely assisted student coping efforts; interaction that was accusatory, demanding and conflictual likely did not.

Finally, family members served as an important source of support, both practical and affective. Once again, however, this varied by family type (see note 31, above). The provision of support requires that at least two conditions be met: that one party is willing to offer support and that the other party is willing to accept it. Both conditions appeared to vary as a function of family closeness: the closer the family, the more willing - even eager - to provide support and the more willing their offspring to accept it. At one extreme, some parents were prepared to drive hundreds of kilometers merely to ensure that their daughter could come home for a weekend. Similarly, they regularly supplied "care packages" of food, clothing and other oddments (eg., plants, posters, stuffed animals, etc.), provided extra cash on demand, and made telephone contact as often as daily throughout the first semester (paying for all long distances charges themselves, irrespective of who initiated the call).³⁴ At the other extreme, some parents were so busy with their own lives that they were virtually absent from their son's or daughter's daily diary. Predictably, parent-student contact was minimal, as infrequent as once monthly, and no effort whatever was made to provide practical

³³ Such efforts were likely mediated by additional factors such as family income and distance between the family home and the university.

³⁴ Money was a problem for a number of subjects. In this respect, several subjects complained that the university was less than supportive of their efforts at budgeting. A standard problem concerned the late arrival of government grants. Another is explained as follows: Somewhat angry that her phone bill from the beginning of semester won't come in 'til mid-November. "They tell you to budget, but how can you when you can't even find out your phone account for 2.5 months? And it's like that with a lot of bills and other university accounts around here; you just get it all at once, without any appointed periods of accounting or telling what it's going to be." [buddy of 162F/I OC24].

aid. Some compromise between these extremes characterized mid-range families, with such efforts complicated in some cases by parents whose efforts to provide support were rebuffed by their student offspring.

Both in this context and more generally, the differential relation between students and their mothers and fathers is especially noteworthy. While a minority of subjects felt close to both parents and even fewer felt close to neither parent, the majority felt much closer to mothers than to fathers. In effect, just as subjects provided support for the image of the inarticulate and affectively unavailable boyfriend, so they also gave credence to the notion of the distant and uninvolved father. Consequently, when speaking about emotional and practical support given and received, in the majority of cases this refers to the on-going relationship between mothers and their student offspring.

Theme 24: Status Aspiration. A special case of family influence involves the transmission of parental expectations and desired regarding higher education to their offspring. Known as **status aspiration**, study of this process constitutes a major area of family research (Hafner, 1986; Kutner & Brogan, 1979; see Benjamin, 1988a). While the decision to go on to higher education is a complex one, and multiply determined, **three** factors appear critical: parental expectations, the closeness of the parent-child relationship, and social class. As regards the last factor, aspiration is directly related to class, with aspiration highest among middle and upper-class adolescents and lowest among their lower-class counterparts.

Among student subjects, nearly all of whom are of middle-class origin, evidence of status aspiration was clear and unequivocal. However, as the following comments attest, there was an important difference between students from **old money** and **new money families** (see Baker, 1989). As used here, 'old money' refers to families that have been middle class for generations. Conversely, 'new money' refers either to families that have only recently entered the middle class or to working class families that have, on their own

and/or with governments grants,³⁵ found a way to send their offspring to university. In addition, 'new money' students were those who were the first ever in the history of their family to enter university.

Old Money

[My parents] are very pleased - they really wanted me to go [to university]. Both of my parents are university graduates and both my grandparents - all my aunts and uncles; it's kind of in the family. I was just going to go to college, but they wanted me to go to university. They thought it would be much better for me to go to university. I never thought I wouldn't go to university. I didn't even think about it - I was just going.... [144F/I SE15].

It's always been an unspoken law in our house that we would go to university. It was always expected we'd go to college or university. There was never any question, really. [123F/I SE19].

I wasn't aware that I was [going to go to university]. That they kind of expected me to go until grade 11... My Dad was going to put some stocks in the stock market. And my Mom said, "Well, we should keep it for [subject's] education, for when she goes to university." And I just remember hearing that sentence and from then on, I kind of assumed that they wanted me to go. [112F/I SE29].

University, there was never really much question [that I would go]. It's partly because of my family, and I just always wanted to go to university too. It wasn't anything I ever fought against. It's never really been a question at all. [101M/I SE28].

New Money

No one in our family ever, in [European country], no one ever, in any part of my family, has anyone gone to university, so that in itself was quite an accomplishment. It took a while for [my parents] to understand why I really wanted to go and also to get used to the fact that I'd be living away from home. There's a lot of influences, like drugs and sex and alcohol, and I think, like I'm still their little girl and that kind of stuff. They've never pushed me into stuff but I've always been achieving for high grades and stuff like that. I think it's just a natural succession, but still it's a different change for all of us. At first I was like, "Oh, my God, I have to do well!" I felt quite a bit of pressure but then I thought that no one's putting the pressure on except for myself. [115F/I SE27].

[My parents are] proud about [my going to university]. I mean I'm the first one in the family completely, like, all my other relatives went [to high school] as well. I'm the first one, so everybody wants to know what it's like. Everybody is very pleased, and very proud, and so my parents are saying, "Do you know our son is going to so and so - Oh, really?" [116M/I SE19].

Mom gave me some money for clothes. I was really surprised because I never thought she'd do that. But I guess it means she approves [of my going to university] and wants to help. But financially she isn't able to contribute very much. It's strange, sort of. I'm absolutely the first from any side of all the sides of my family to go to university, so nobody in the family could tell me much about it or what to expect. [162F/I SE26].

³⁵ Additional support may have come from one or more student scholarships.

I'm the first one in our family to go to university EVER - the third out of all my cousins to go to university - and the first to ever go away. Talk about paving the road. Now I've got everybody who are so proud of me - I've got my grandmother, my aunt, and [others]. Before, I was always the black sheep of the family. Now, all of a sudden I've become good! [126F/I SE27].

What emerges from these comments is a picture of **differential pressure**. While subjects from both sets of families were expected to do well, those from 'new money' families had to bear the triple burden of their parents' proud expectations, their family's honour in the face of extended kin and family friends, and, in some cases, the obligation associated with a financial commitment that their parents could ill afford. This last source of pressure was eloquently, if painfully, expressed by the following subject whose money status was not specified.

I feel like I should be working as hard as I can because it's not my money, it's [my parent's] money, and I don't want to waste it... [If it were my money] it might be different, I wouldn't feel so bad, if I, say, I failed a course.... [147F/I DE01].

In addition, apart from going on to university per se, parents could influence the student's specific choice of university, in this case, the University of Guelph.

And [my father] did not like [University of] Toronto; experiencing it with one child [in university] was enough for him. He'd always say, "Have you ever thought of Guelph?" I always used to think Guelph as being the Agriculture [school], that would be the only way I would ever go there and I think that was sort of on the back of his mind. I said, "Dad, I'm not going to be a vet[erinarian], I'm not going into Ag Business or Ag Science, so why should I go to Guelph?" But then I finally decided that I would [go to Guelph]. [120F/I DE14].

[My parents] really wanted me to go to university and really wanted me to live in residence and have that experience because for a while, I was thinking of going to U[niversity] of T[oronto] but that was fine - I didn't get into residence - so they said, well, don't go to U of T. Go to Guelph, you've got residence there. [119F/I SE15].

These data speak to cross-linkage in **two** senses. First, and most obviously, they point to a direct association between family relations and student aspirations regarding higher education. The knowledge that their parents expected them to attend university and that they may have made financial preparations towards that end both exerted a significance influence on student's personal intentions with regard to their educational future. In turn, there was some indication that such expectations could also influence student motivation regarding academic performance. Given the results of the preceeding theme (see above, **Theme**

22), it is tempting to speculate about the possible variation in status aspiration by family type. Subject diaries, however, were not sufficiently systematic to make pursuit of this issue profitable. Second, among students from 'new money' families, parental - indeed , family - expectations appeared to translate into active and persistent pressure, albeit, as one subject perceptively noted, self-induced. If this interpretation is correct, it has immediate implications for student efforts to cope with transitional. We have already seen that such stress was multi-determined, encompassing such diverse sources as change in daily routine, workload, peer relations and boyfriend relations, to name only the most prominent. It now appears that family relations could be yet another source of stress, at least for the students in question.

Theme 25: Stability and Change. The bulk of the family literature concerned with undergraduate students is cross-sectional in character and thus unconcerned with either stability or change (Benjamin, 1988a). Of those studies that are longitudinal in character, most focus on change with respect to some set of psychological characteristics *within* students (eg., Giddan, 1987; Lester, 1986; Straub, 1987); stability or change in the patterned transactions which characterize relations between parents and students have largely been ignored.

In light of the findings to this point within the 'family' subdomain, this approach is puzzling, for it grossly oversimplifies such transaction processes, and ignores their interdependent character.³⁶ In contrast, the experience of student subjects was more consistent with a systemic perspective (see note 33).

More specifically, this involved **four** distinctions. First, while some subjects reported **change** in parent-student interaction, others reported relative **stability**. Second, such processes applied across at least four dimensions related to family dynamics: (1) parent-student interaction in general; (2) parent-student interaction specific to the issue of independence; (3) the interaction between parents and other siblings; and, (4) parents' marital relationship. Third, stability or change across these dimensions was perceived as either **positive** or **negative**, that is, it was experienced either as comforting and satisfying, or as distressing and

³⁶ From a systemic perspective, relations among and between family members are conceptualized as necessarily **organized** and **interdependent**. Consequently, a major change in one family member (ie., as a result of going away to university) is likely to reverberate throughout the entire family system (Benjamin, 1983).

dissatisfying. Finally, stability and change varied by **family type**, although only subjects identified as affectionate or hostile independent will be included in this analysis; there were too few subjects in other categories to warrant such assertions.

Theoretically, intersection of these various distinctions should yield a 32-fold category scheme. Unfortunately, due to the small sample size, only a limited range of categories were present in subject reports; the balance were left empty or null. In general, however, roughly two thirds of subjects experienced some change in family relations associated with their departure to university, with positive change more likely among affectionate independent than hostile independent subjects.

Support for these assertions derive from subject comments, beginning with those touching on stability as regards family dynamics.

INTERACTIONAL STABILITY:

Relations with Subject: General

As far as [the] relationship with my parents go, things haven't changed that much. I do talk with my Mom a lot more now. At the beginning of the semester, when I came home for the first couple of times my family was nice to me, I thought, "Wow, this is great!" But I realize now that nothing has really changed. The reason why they were nice to me was because I hadn't been around to do anything wrong. Nobody was really excited about me being home (except my dog) and they still weren't all that interested in hearing about what was going on in my life. That may be why I don't miss them; I reached a point... where I was really looking forward to leaving home [to go to university]. It wasn't just because I didn't want my parents telling me what to do, it was because I was sick of being around people who didn't want to listen to what I had to say. It's not like I have an awful family, in fact I think I'm luckier than a lot of people when it comes to a good family. I'm just the odd member, the different one who doesn't really belong. [147F/D DE01].

[My mother] agrees with my point of view on [my father]. It's just that she said, "You've got to learn to manipulate him." Whenever I ask him a question, like to go someplace, I usually just say, "Can I do this?" She says, "Don't do that; you have to beat around the bush first." I can't do that. [134F/I DE06].

I don't really think my relationship with Mum is changing all that much; we were such good friends before that I don't think it'll change very drastically. [113F/D SE08].

Relations with Subject: Independence

Went and got an ice cream at McDonalds and sat and watched TV with family. Fought with Dad about my life and how it should be run. The outcome was that I told him I was a grown woman and that I'll do whatever I please. [104F/D NV05].

Got scolded from Dad for being noisy at dinner table with [younger] brother [name]. Realized how out of place parental domination is in my life. [112F/D OC02].

Relations with Other Siblings - null.

Parents' Marital Relationship

When I've gone back, I don't think I've seen any changes in which [my parents] relate to each other.... as far as my parents are concerned, I think they get along pretty fine.... I don't think they have any difficulties in the way the family's set up now, with one person out of it, moved away. The only difference that I can see is when I go back, is how they respond to me because I'm away. They miss me and those few days that I'm with them, it's looked forward to. I'm a little sad actually [to] come back [home]. [116F/I DE01].

Something came up that Dad [biological father, divorced] decided to do, something completely opposite [to] what we had decided doing. But I talked to Dad and said, "No! Wait a sec!" So I called Mom after that and said, "Hey, Mom, want to hear the latest funny one that Dad's pulled?" I love my Dad dearly, but he's very forgetful sometimes! He's done some really neat things in the past. But Mom's reaction was rather, well, quite a bit more serious than I expected. And she talked about, if this isn't settled by Christmas, I'm going to start legal proceedings. And I went, "AHHH!!" [113F/I DE16].

Thus, "stability" could mean different things as a function of prevailing family dynamics. Among subjects in hostile independent families, separateness meant lack of caring, continuing conflict (especially with fathers) and chafing against parental restrictions which diverged from subjects' new found independence. However, in affectionate independent families, "stability" typically referred to on-going cordiality and mutual understanding. As for parent's marital relationship, offspring often have very little sense of their parents as real people and, as a function of the changes in their own lives, may experience a pressing need to see their parents as unchanging (Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 1983). It was hardly surprising, then, that many subjects simply characterized their parent's marital relationship as "fine".

Turning to change, subject comments yield a relatively similar picture.

INTERACTIONAL CHANGE

Relations with Subject: General

At 4:30 [PM], I left on the bus to go home. I felt a little strange leaving the university. It was almost like I had only been here on holiday and I was leaving for good. When I saw my family, it felt like I had been away for a very long time. They all had their own routines and lives that I didn't fit into anymore. They had planted trees in the park across the street from my house. When I saw this, it really made me feel as if I had been away for a long time. I felt as if I had been isolated for a long time. It was strange going home again. My family treated me as if I was a guest because they had gotten used to me not being there. [119F/D SE16].

To my very dismay, my Mom is having a very hard time coping with me [being] gone, but she didn't make it evident to me. Like, I spoke to ... my Mom's friend. And she goes, "[Subject], [your Mom] talkS about you all the time. She's so worried about you, she wants to come down and visit you." She wanted to come down on Homecoming Weekend, when there's toilet paper all over the campus and broken windows. And I said, "Mom, I don't think you should come down." It upset me a lot because I'm the one who's doing fine, I'm the one who should be having problems. Back home, they're supposed to be supporting me and I'm the one who's worrying about them. This must be really bizarre! [112F/I SE29]. My room [at home] felt like a hotel room, Mom's clothes in my closet, drawers; brother uses my desk as office space. [112F/D SE30].

[My mother] treats me, not a lot differently, but more like as her friend than just her daughter any more, like I'm more her good friend than her daughter and we seem to be on the same level whereas before I was always a young girl... when I went home last weekend, she goes, well, Dad and I were talking about [your sexuality] and we figured that you're old enough and if you're going to decide to be sexually active then you will go on the pill. And I just looked at her and I thought, this isn't the same mother I knew before I went [to university]... and my Dad seems to be loving and caring toward me. Before we used to fight like cats and dogs and now we don't. [104F/I DE01].

[My relations with my parents have] changed in the sense that when I see them they're always happy to see me, and before it was like, "Oh, what are you doing here; leave me alone, I'm busy." Now I walk in the kitchen and my mother's all hugs and kisses. I practically, I can't believe it, it's so different. I think they're more emotional than usual. [My mother's] made my favourite dinner. [148F/I SE15].

Relations with Subject: Independence

It felt good to be back home and see my family, but I could see and feel the difference, the fact that I've started to make my own way and be a lot more independent, and it felt more like I was visiting than returning to my home. But it still felt good to be there. [144F/D OC06].

It hasn't changed in the sense that it's worse or better... but they [do] give me more freedom, like so much more freedom that it's like, well, you can tell me what to do every once in a while because when I do [come] home it's like well, do what you want, you're used to doing what you want [at university], and I'm like WHAT!! [117F/I DE13].

I talked to [father, divorced] about switching into [program]. He's very concerned that I don't close any doors that I'm not sure I want closed. I tried to reassure him. I think he knows that I know what I'm doing, but he's like most parents I know - they have to give the expected speeches most of the time for their sake, not for their kid's! It's nice talking to Dad about this stuff though; it feels as if he's more involved in my life since I hit Moo U [ie., Guelph]. Maybe I'm just more aware of him. [113F/D OC05].

Relations with Other Siblings

I invited my brother down [to the university] for Homecoming. We are getting [along] a lot better now since I've been gone. I think he needs time away from my father who's enough to drive anyone crazy. [104F/D SE14].

My sister's are closer [to each other] than they were before [I left] and I think it's probably because I'm not around. And I'm closer to my [younger sister]. Well, [younger sister] and I were really close anyway, but she really misses me and I can really tell. When I see her, [the] things she does for me, it's almost ridiculous. She's so nice to me. [117F/I DE13].

And my poor little brother, he's [...] years old. He's very strong.... He called me the other night, my parents were out. He said, "[Subject], I'm glad you're coming home. Everything's getting really weird here." It's so funny because the kids are behaving like the adults, and the adults are kind of recessing [ie., regressing]. [112F/I SE29].

Parents' Marital Relationship

Yes, my Mom and Dad seem to be getting along a lot more and they seem to be getting closer. They wrote me a letter and said, they just got back from playing "Win, Lose or Draw" with their friends and they never did that before. So they go out and have fun a lot more now because my brother's working and he's really busy all the time, so it's just the two of them and they seem to be getting closer. [104F/I DE01].

My mother and father aren't getting along that well, so no one asked me much about how I was doing because they were all too busy complaining. My dog was very happy to see me and my cat stuck by my side during the entire weekend. [147F/D SE18].

Once again these data speak to variation, first by family type, second by specific relationship. For members of hostile independent family, change was experienced negatively, as in lack of concern or interest. For members of affectionate independent families, change was experienced positively, as in improved cordiality and closeness. This was complicated, however, by variation across specific relationships. Siblings shift around in the absence of student subjects; some get closer to each other, others become more distant, and still others alter relations between themselves and one or both of their parents. Similarly, parents were more respectful, appreciative and affectionate, although, as a function of family type, this could reflect on-going processes or merely a flash in the pan born of the reduced frequency of interaction. As for parents as marital partners, most subjects were rather indifferent, although there was some evidence of change there as well.

As a rule, subjects' observations were nearly always most acute with respect to those processes which affected them personally. This was hardly surprising. At 18 or 19 years of age, most subjects were immature and egocentric: they were going away, they were undergoing all kinds of stresses and strains. From this perspective, it would seem only reasonable to expect that the family back home stay much the same. That time and again it did not was, for most, a shocking discovery about which many felt justifiably outraged.

Such outrage notwithstanding, the fact of both stability and change is of larger significance, for it speaks to the issue of **reciprocal** cross-linkage. To this point, repeated evidence has been noted to the effect that parents influenced their student offspring. Here, evidence shows that the reverse was also true, that subjects simultaneously influenced not just their parents, but indeed their entire family. If correct, this interpretation recastes the entire issue of cross-linkage in a new light. To paraphrase Bateson (1972), it appears that these bits and pieces of evidence are all partial arcs within a larger ecological circuit. Put differently, this is to suggest that sources of influence - from parents and from subjects - are **not** separate processes; rather, they are both part of the same process in the form of a **feedback loop**. Thus, parents influenced subjects to attend university. Once there, they, in turn, by their absence and their behavior at a distance, influenced family processes. These, in turn, influenced subjects on-going behavior at the university, which influenced family behavior back home, and so on, in an endless loop. "Family ghosts", it appears, were not merely roaming the campus; they haunted the family as well.

Theme 26: Cross-Linkage. In previous themes, examples of cross-linkage have been unearthed by chance, while pursuing some other matter. Here, cross-linkage will itself be the primary focus. In particular, **two** variations will be explored: first, the relationship between family processes and subject academic performance; and, second, the diverse impacts of the family relations of romantic partners. Finally, as promised, the final days of subject #105 will be chronicled, just prior to her decision to drop out, with special emphasis on family cross-linkage.

Academic Performance

There are various ways in which family members could influence student academic performance. **Four** such pathways are addressed below by subject comments concerning, respectively, **support, motivation, demand and persistence.**

In the last few days... [subject has] had a long talk with her parents about this situation and has been very relieved that they will stand behind any decisions she makes around program choice. As a result of these talks [subject] has become less tense about the necessity to complete the [...] program, or to finish in the standard 8 semester format. She is now (as she formerly was not) able to consider dropping a course in order to achieve better marks in the remainder [and] the extra time required if 4 course attempts a semester becomes

her norm is no longer a deterrent... Her parents aren't being directive, just supportive, which is a relief; she had thought that specific expectations would be laid on her, but they are just helping her to look at options. Hers is a family in which Higher Education is taken for granted, so this has always been part of her 'life vision', but the self-made demands for superior achievement are beginning to be modified to doing the best she can. [Buddy of 169F/I OC13].

Went to write the 1st [course] module. I was pretty sure that I understood how to do everything and I got 10 [out of 10] on it. I was really happy; I felt like calling home but I realized that no one would be there. Over the day my joy fizzed out. [147F/D SE15].

Went to do homework. Didn't get much done. Want sister home, can't get anything done, bored without her. [105F/D OC08].

[My father] doesn't think [my sister and I] should go [to university]. He doesn't think you need it. He wanted to go to college when he was really young and [his parents] couldn't afford it and his parents wouldn't help him or anything, so he doesn't really think we should [go]. We are paying for our own [tuition] and he won't help. Just because I think he is jealous. [105F/I SE15].

My father picked me up at [residence], went home, made a remark about me transferring school! Meaning: time to come home for good!! [126F/D SE30].

Talked to parents (Mom upset about me coming back up here [to university]). [117F/D OC13].

Thus, friends and romantic partners were not the only ones who could simultaneously be sources of support and demand; the same was true of parents. With regard to the former, they gave permission to students to lower their unrealistic expectations, and could help maintain student motivation by providing encouragement as well as sharing academic successes and failures. With regard to the latter, family interaction took time that might otherwise be used to do academic work. Families could also directly attempt to influence persistence, in the above examples, by pressuring students to drop out.

Family Members and Romantic Partners

Anyhow, [my boyfriend and I] are hiding because his Mom won't give me a chance. She never wants to know that her son is with me or she'll breakdown. Yet [boyfriend] still wants me. He's [age] and great. A perfect friend! and a sweet boyfriend. [156F/D SE03].

[Subject] has had a 'fairly serious' relationship since [month]. They broke up for a while in the Spring but (to her surprise) got back together for the Summer. Unfortunately, [boyfriend] has not 'made the peace' with her mother and this creates another source of stress for [subject]. Her mother resents her boyfriend for the 'pain and suffering' he caused [subject] when they broke up. They spent most of the summer together but avoided her mother. [Subject] now realizes that if the relationship is to survive, he must smooth things over with her family. [buddy of 152F/I SE27].

[Boyfriend's] Mom calls to thank me for the pumpkins. I began to cry. I like Mrs. [name] very much. I miss her as much as, if not more than my own mother. [134F/D OC10].

[Boyfriend] calls to tell me he doesn't think he will be visiting. I am crushed as I hear these dreaded words, and my insides boil as though I have just drunken a glass of bleach. His Mom doesn't want him to go, and I remember her crying to me over the phone when [boyfriend] left home, how I was there to comfort her, now she won't let [boyfriend] and I be together! [112F/D SE22].

I think [the relationship between my boyfriend and my father will] probably bring us closer. I see a lot of my Dad in him. I think that's probably why I'd do anything for [boyfriend]. It's incredible how well my father and him get along.... whereas my mother's like, "Oh, how are you?" She tries hard with [boyfriend] but she doesn't really know what to say to him. [137F/I SE15].

Once again, variation was the rule. In one version, relations between parents and romantic partners were perceived by subjects as an additional source of stress. In another, the partner's parents gradually became significant others to subjects. So long as the relationship went well, they were thus an additional source of support. However, should the romantic relationship experience difficulty, both sets of parents could quickly complicate matters considerably. Yet a third variation was one in which the relationship between one or both parents and the romantic partner could facilitate the relationship between the romantic pair. All three variation shared a common characteristic: they too could arrive on campus as "ghosts" further complicating the already complicated social lives of subjects.

Subject #105

In the following dated series of comments, subject #105 herself eloquently chronicles her last days at the university before she officially dropped out.

[Close relative] is dying of cancer and I really didn't think it would affect me so much, but it has. It's been on my mind a lot. I was really upset Monday but I'm OK [now]. Not great, but OK. [105F/D SE30].

On the [date] at approximately [time] I was told my [relative] died... Monday I spent trying to [do] homework but was not concentrating. I couldn't understand why... Thursday - upset all day. Confused and worried. I don't know what to do. [105F/D OC15].

Tried to do [course] homework. I noticed I wasn't concentrating, so I went to bed at 9:00 [PM]. At 9:45 [PM] I got up and phoned my sister as I couldn't sleep. I started crying, saying I was going to quit as I only got [...] % on my [course 1] exam and I missed my [course 2] exam and a [course 1] quiz and I was so behind. I missed [relative], [name] my sister, and Mom and Dad. I didn't know what to do or what I wanted. I just knew I was going to quit. She said it was up to me. Great! [105F/D OC19].

... I failed my [course] exam, I don't know how! I felt so prepared and ready... I phoned my Mom ...[and my] sister. I told [my sister] and she told me to go talk to a counsellor and figure out what I wanted to do. I know I could [get through university]. I just put my foot in the wrong hole at the beginning of the semester and its been hard to pull it back out. I think I'm just going to start again after this year... I came to the conclusion to drop out until next semester, work in the meantime and figure out what I wanted to do. That night my Mom showed up here because she was worried about me. Anyhow, I went home Thursday night with my Mom and relaxed. [105F/D OC27].

At 9:30 [PM] I talked to my RA. She's worried about me. She thinks I'm making a mistake [dropping out]. I don't think so though. I fast-tracked through high school, had no fun at all and expected to have a good time at least a little when I came to Guelph but I haven't and it bothered me. [105F/D OC31].

Well, this is the last day I write [in this diary]... I dropped [out], no withdrew from this institution... I know now why it was so hard a step, because I didn't want to be considered a failure, but I know now I'm not, especially if I intend on coming back. If anyone else does feel I am a failure, I don't care, they don't know me very well. I will do well. [105F/D NV03].

From what we have learned about this subject, seen through the lens of prominent theories of attrition, she would have been regarded as 'at risk' for drop out. Tinto (1987), for examples, places heavy emphasis on social and academic integration. Subject #105 was clearly low on both dimensions. Socially, she had few friends, participated in few social activities, and did not become involved with a romantic partner. Academically, she did poorly and had developed no connections to any professor or teaching assistant; she indicates no special excitement in any of her courses.

This said, even at their best, such models can do no better than explain about 40% of the variance. The story of subject #105 helps explain why by indicating the consequences of limiting ones theoretical vision to events and persons on campus. Based on the accounts of subject #105 and many others, the prerequisites for academic and social integration have their roots **not** on campus but rather predominantly in the routine transactions among family members experienced over a life time. With respect to academic matters, this includes intellectual self-esteem, the impetus to go to university, the expectations regarding academic achievement, and the response of self and significant others to the on-going fact of performance as a facet of motivation. With respect to social matters, this includes family relations as a pattern for relating to others, social self-esteem, social skills, the on-going affective state of the individual in response to social experience, and the integrity of the family unit (vis-a-vis loss of a member). In addition, it includes

some assessment concerning the relative status of the family versus the university; with the former relatively "high", the latter seems to appear particularly "low". Thus, the likely capacity of any given individual to cope with the intellectual and social demands of the university begin long before university entry, suggesting that both familial and campus-based academic and social processes must be included in any adequate model of student attrition.

Discussion

The findings explored in this subdomain support a series of inferences regarding the relationship between entering freshmen and their family members. First, students were **involved** with family members on an on-going basis; this did not cease just because they left home to go to university. This involvement was physical, with contact ensured through telephone calls, letters and face-to-face contact, either with students going home or with parents and others visiting the university. Involvement was also emotional. Whether they loved them or hated them, students could stop thinking about family members, comparing their behavior against known parental values and standards, and assessing their academic performance against parental expectations. Finally, involvement was not limited to parents; it also extended to siblings and pets as well as all manner of extended kin.

Second, students perceived family members as **salient**. When under stress or confronted with a personal problem, it was often family members that students consulted first. Indeed, as a function of the issue at hand, family members could be preferred as confidants despite the often ready availability of peers. Further, despite the fact that many freshman students came to feel quite comfortable at the university, 'home' - the place where they could truly relax and be themselves - remained back home, in the familiar relations with family members.

Third, students perceived family members as **influential**. Despite their public denials (vis-a-vis the student survey), students' decision to go to university was often based, at least in part, on the fact that parents expected them to do so and/or approved of this course of action. In part too, students sought to

perform academically with parents and other family members in their mind's eye; for them, the meaning of 'success' and 'failure' were typically used as relational as well as objective terms. Thus, for some students, 'success' was a 'C', for it allowed them to remain in university despite their parents' expectations that they would fail. For others, especially those from 'old money' families, failure could well have been a 'B' when measured against a family tradition of academic honours. In either case, family members were influential as one of several bases maintaining student motivation. Whereas parental sympathy, encouragement or praise could raise the spirits of students otherwise discouraged, so parental criticism, disdain and, worst of all, indifference, could dampen the joy of even the brightest triumph.

Fourth, relations between students and their family members were marked by considerable variation. Such relations varied, first, by family type. Some students enjoyed uniformly cordial, affectionate, and close relations with all family members. Others were marked by conflict, tension, distance and even indifference. Another source of variation resided in the specific relations within the family. In general, students were closer to their mothers than their fathers. Mothers were often portrayed as the involved parent; the one with whom one talked over one's problems, the one with whom one shared intimacies, and also the one who set limits and, when necessary, delivered punishment. Fathers were often portrayed as the uninvolved and distant parent; the parent who was too busy with work, the one who was never there when one needed him, say during personal crises, the one who, even when present, never knew what to say or how to say it - so he remained silent when even inappropriate speech would have been preferred. In a similar vein, relations between students and their siblings varied. A third source of variation involved support and demand. Like friends and romantic others, family members too varied in the extent to which they provided the former and made the latter. Some parents were so supportive as to inadvertently encourage student dependence. Others were so demanding as to prevent student closeness. Most families were somewhere in the middle, providing support but making demands too, including the expectation of continued student involvement in family affairs. Finally, a fourth source of variation concerned change and stability, and especially the affective sign (positive or negative) attached to either. Despite the departure of the student, some family relationships seemed not to change, especially those that were either previously very close or very conflictual. Indeed, in

hostile independent families, it was not uncommon for a sibling to take the place of the absent student, thus maintaining intact a dysfunction pattern of relating. However, the more common consequence was for student departure to precipitate change of some kind. Marital relations might improve or worsen. Parents could begin to appreciate their student offspring more or could turn away from them entirely. Students might experience a 'sudden' increase in independence and perceived maturity or could just as suddenly rebel at previously routine parental restrictions. Finally, each source of variation typically did not operate in isolation; rather, they were interdependent, with family type, for example, feeding forward to effect particular relationships which, in turn, influenced the perception of stability or change, and so on.

Fifth, family behavior at home and student behavior in the university were **cross-linked**. As already noted, family influences included status transmission, student expectations, motivations, values, standards and affective states. As a function of the patterns associated with family type, family likely also influenced student relations with new and old friends as well as romantic others. Indeed, evidence as to the impact of relations between students, romantic others and their respective sets of parents was explicit. In some cases, such cross-linkage could be positive (eg., supportive), in others negative (eg., critical). The same was true with respect to academic performance in particular and university attendance in general. However, cross-linkage was **not** exclusively from parent to students. The reverse was also true; even in their absence - indeed, in some cases, **because** of it - students could also significantly affect family relations.

Finally, in accord with the work of Becker et al. (1968), these data speak simultaneously to the **complexity** of students as whole persons and to the **balance** which defined student maturity. By treating absent others as "ghosts" and imagining them interacting with those present on the university campus, it becomes possible, at least in metaphor, to get some sense of the sheer complexity of student social networks. Old old friends, old new friends, new friends (roommates and others), romantic others and their parents, students and their immediate family members (parents, siblings, pets) and their extended kin - all 'present' in some form, all interacting with at least some others and, most important, all in some sense salient and influential, having **consequences** for freshman student behavior. The key social task, then, of the first semester and one hidden from all but the most acute and perceptive freshmen was somehow to achieve a

balance between this mass of significant others and the heavy demands of the academic curriculum. The attempt to do so was, it appears, a critical bases of transitional stress. Moreover, it was one that many students found simply impossible, a source of tension that gave rise to the following lament which was likely representative of most entering freshmen:

My parents don't really know what it's like to study. Because if you're not studying, you're trying to relax. You can't study, work, relax and have time for others. [156F/D NV06].

Domain 3: ENVIRONMENTAL

The ENVIRONMENTAL domains divides into three subdomains concerned, respectively, with residence life, university campus, and university services.

Subdomain: RESIDENCE LIFE

Theme 27: Residential Locus. The study of residence life encompasses a large and very complex literature. Just how complex is made clear by the first comprehensive review of this literature (Benjamin, 1988b). Such diversity does not lend itself to easy summarization; the literature encompasses a large number of themes. However, a central thrust of this work serves to depict residence systems as essentially **connective environments**, opening students to new experiences, exposing them to a wide range of eligible others with whom peer relations may develop, and providing a rich and stimulating context in which students may grow and develop.

Subject comments in this and the preceding domain clearly support such a view. However, in the present theme, subjects also suggest that there is another side to the residence experience, namely, that it is **exclusionary**, restricting the range and variety of experienced events and people. In effect, subjects comments suggest that if we treat the perspective represented by the literature like a single doll, than subjects' perspective is that of a pair of nested (Russian) dolls, with the smaller 'connective' doll on the inside and

the larger 'exclusionary' doll on the outside: both reflect an aspect of reality; however, it is the exclusionary process which provides the context within which the connective process is operative.

This formulation is illustrated by a sequence of subject comments which begin at the outer boundary of the university campus, move in to focus on the residence room, and then move outward again to the social world beyond the university. Thus, the residence system coupled with academic demands meant that as freshmen entered the world of the university, they were forced to leave a good part of the external world behind them.

In the U.C. co-op store [I] bought a T-shirt, as a present for [boyfriend]. I have decided to go home this weekend. If you live in residence, you seem to basically just study, study, study. I haven't watched TV once since I've been here. I need to go home and relax and just try to escape from the university for a little bit. [119F/D SE13].

One thing that's really not good is I haven't had much communication with [the world] outside of [the] campus, not much radio or television at all. I just lose track of everything. I only hear about the super important things, like hurricanes, the disasters and elections... Well, you never see the outside community. And I don't [go] off campus for things. I've been off campus for the purpose of getting something once. I think it's not bad but it's not good either, 'cause it's like living in a separate little world. It's not really real. And the university is like a little community but it doesn't have the different levels of life, of age groups, and so on. Going off campus is almost shocking because I walked through the Eaton Centre and I was seeing little children and lower high school age kids, and I don't see those people here. And it was almost, wow, I'd forgotten that they exist. [144F/I NV21].

Cut off from others in the world 'outside', subjects were forced inward, to interaction with those with whom they shared the residence, from among whom peers would be selected; even the classroom setting was not really suitable for this purpose.

I thought I'd meet a lot more people [than I did by living in residence]... But the situation the way it is, all the rooms sort of stacked [all] on one side of each other, it's hard to meet people that way. I'm so disappointed. I've gone out of my way to try and meet people from the other rooms, but it's hard because everybody tends to get kind of cliquey after the first week. [119F/I SE15].

They are only acquaintances. I do meet people but only within the classroom. I find it is very difficult to get close to a person in a lecture because it is a formal setting and it is difficult to get personal. So it is really hard to make friends in that kind of a setting. [118F/I SE15].

When we're walking, say we're coming from dinner, I can't believe how big [residence] is, because all you ever see really is [the people in] your lounge. And there's no need for you to go into other lounges, I know other people in some of them, but I only ever see them

if we're out. I won't go into their lounge and say, "Well, how are things going?" It's really strange when you think of it, as 400 other people living there. [161F/I DE13].

Thus, students met others as a function of simple proximity and frequency of contact; the floor and even the specific lounge became the operational extent of their social environment. Indeed, as noted earlier and reaffirmed here, as a function who subjects happens to meet initially, acquaintanceship could evolve not among those on the floor in which a given student lived, but in another residence altogether.

It seems to work that way. I get along with most people, I think, like I said, the people on my floor and that. You just get close to them because you're living together and you're doing things together. You see them in the lounge and that. [101M/I SE28].

[Second residence] is becoming my second home here at Guelph. Even the people there have noticed that. A guy [name] from [second residence] doesn't miss a day where he tells me to go home. And now [roommate] comes along, too. I've had brief exchanges with the girls from my floor and I like them, yet nothing more comes of it. Well, I'll keep trying. [133F/D SE21].

In the end, the residence room itself was often the central focus of time and activity while in residence.

I got up, had a shower and cleaned my room. It seems to always be dirty. Maybe it's because I spend so much time here. Who knows? Who cares? I'm the one who cleans it everyday because I hate messes!!! [162F/D SE10]. I seem to spend mega amounts of time in my room. [162F/D SE11].

I had requested a double room but I was given a single room instead. In many ways, this was good. I would have space to myself, and since I am an only child, I am accustomed to having space and time to myself. In fact, I would usually spend about 5 to 6 hours a day, excluding sleeping, all by myself, usually in my room [at home]. On the other hand, I had requested a roommate because I wanted someone with whom I could become close friends. [134F/D SE05].

However, even with a room, there was no guarantee that subjects spent all the time they would have preferred in it. There were several possible reasons for this. One could involve being forced to vacate periodically in order to accomodate the social needs of one's roommate. Another could relate to the intrusive character of noise on the residence floor.

Yes, that's where I'm used to studying, laying on top of my bed and studying. I went home one weekend to study but last night [in my residence room] I almost went beserk because it was so noisy and people were yelling and hollering and banging on doors at 10:30 at night and for some reason I feel like I'm the only one who's studying in that hall, so I know tonight I'm going to spend the whole night at the library because there's no way if that noise keeps up [that I can study in my room]. I'm going to be living in the library for the whole two weeks. [104F/I DE04].

We went to the liquor store at the Eaton Centre and got something to drink, Rye [Whiskey]. We came back here (to [residence]) and proceeded to drink ourselves silly, and we had a good time and played guitar... At about 1 o'clock [AM], after watching Ben Johnson win the gold, [boyfriend] and I went to bed. [Roommate] was sleeping in [male's] room. [Boyfriend] and I made love and it was nice. We woke up late morning and had a shower together. It's so neat living on your own so to speak because you can do those sort of things. [149F/D SE23/24].

The comment immediately above illustrates yet another basis for exclusionary processes in residence, the tendency of students to transfer patterns of behavior learned at home directly into the residence environment. Here are two more examples from another subject.

But boy those bathrooms. Are they ever ugh, grotty, sometimes. I mean nobody ever cleans them. I never seen any cleaning staff in there, and none of the students ever clean up after themselves. There are times when I just have to get down on my hands and knees and scrub things out before I can bear to use them. If anyone ever saw me they'd think I was crazy but I don't care, I can't use them that way. [162F/I SE26].

And I've been so used to looking after the house and me and my brothers that I'm not helpless about looking after myself here. My goodness, when I see what babies and how untrained some of these students are I can't believe it! "Oooh... you mean this is what a washing machine looks like?!" Honestly, when I phoned my mother, I said thanks to her for teaching me and allowing us to be self-sufficient. It's hard enough to start a new educational life without having to learn the basic things about living too. [162F/I SE26].

Among females only, the upshot of being unable to do things in residence the way they would have preferred - of customizing the room to specifically suit their tastes and preferences - was to push them out of residence and into off-campus living.

In February or March [1989] I also have to start looking for a place to stay come April.... I want to get a job and a house here, and stay here over the Summer. Much as I like residence, I want my cats, I want my own room, and I want to be able to cook for myself. [113F/D DE10].

Thus, we have come full circle. Exclusionary processes gradually narrowed the range of possible living environments as well as the range of peers, ultimately focusing on the residence room as the social centre of life on campus. Suddenly, at least for female subjects, the characteristics of their rooms took on a significance not previously accorded them; they would need to be places where they could comfortably spend a good deal of time studying, relaxing, sleeping, but also socializing with friends and romantic others. In practice, as the full implications of having only the room in which do all these things becomes apparent,

it was equally obvious that such demands exceeded the room's design requirements, and so began the movement out, to fulfill some of these unmet social needs, but also to reconnect with the larger community beyond the boundaries of the campus and to enact the new found independence fostered by residence living.

In a larger sense, the comments reviewed above speak to the discrepancy between student expectations, residence objectives and the immediate reality of residence life. Freshman expectations pictured an idealized environment of friendly, happy, industrious people all working together in harmony. Presumably, this represented a contrast with their experience of high school, with its cliques. But the objectives of residence life also involved an ideal, that of a group of strangers gradually evolving a coherent, self-perpetuating community of scholars. Subjects' experience presents a third, rather different picture: of a group of strangers awkwardly struggling to establish some set of peer relations while dealing with a range of additional demands, not least of them the academic requirements of the university. The inevitable result was a compromise, a balance between social and academic life, in which residence life played a significant part.

That part was both connective and exclusionary. It was connective in the sense that it presented residents with a context in which there was a range of choices: of people, programs and activities. It was exclusionary in the sense that residents were forced, in light of competing demands, to be highly selective. Moreover, residence choices were often imposed from above. Since room allocation was presumably random, and peer selection (at least among new friends) based on proximity and interaction, the sense of selecting from an entire house was, in practice, illusory. The real choices extended to the limits of subject's floor, and was frequently further restricted to those at their end of the floor or perhaps within three doors in either direction.

There was very little students could do to abrogate these constraints. They could meet others in class or they could become involved sports or in some club or student organization. Subjects did indeed

make such efforts; two thirds joined an average of 2.5 such groups (range: 1-7).³⁷ But, as noted above with respect to classroom contact, while this often resulted in making a range of acquaintances, it seldom resulted in any "real" friends. The reason for this is not hard to discover: the initial prerequisite for the development of friendship is sustained, regular interaction. As regards acquiring new friends, the residence environment alone met these requirements, hence its connective and exclusionary character.

Thus, in the end, most students learned to accept and live within the constraints imposed by the residence environment. Within those constraints, however, students were accorded considerable freedom and it was here - in the microenvironment of their floor or especially their room - that student variation in relations with peers, romantic others and family members was enacted. For all intents and purposes, then, all that was meaningful about the university as a total environment was symbolically compressed into only two locations: the classroom, where subjects typically spent perhaps 15 to 20 hours a week, and the residence room, where most of the rest of their academic and social life unfolded.

Theme 28: Activity 1: Orientation. By tradition, orientation refers to the first one or two weeks of the semester,³⁸ and encompasses a range of formal and informal activities. The activities explored below were not limited to this period alone; rather, they were scattered throughout the first semester and all were 'orienting' in their intent. That is, from the perspective of orientation planners - combining university staff and student representatives - their common aims were (1) to provide new students with a range of opportunities to meet people and make friends, (2) to expose them to a range of information that would be useful later in the term, and (3) to ease any initial fears they might have had by starting the semester with a range

³⁷ The following is a typical account of a student involved in such extracurricular activities: My days are getting a lot busier now. I'm a house rep and a food rep for [residence]. It really makes the time go faster. You don't watch TV at all in university, so you need something to fill up your spare time. I am finding now that if I don't stop myself, I will just go on studying indefinitely.

³⁸ In Great Britain, it is known as "fresher week" (Kingsbury, 1974), with new students known as "fresher" as opposed to the North American term "frosh".

of fun activities. In short, such activities were intended to orient freshman students to the university, with the ultimate intention of making the transition from high school as painless as possible.

Having previously described one orientation activity - the mock kidnapping and barbeque - it will come as little surprise that student subjects were split in their review of orientation activities. Some enthused about the fun involved, others were rather more sanguine (and more ambivalent) about the experience, while still others were frankly repulsed and confused by the goings on. In reviewing this range of responses, especially noteworthy was the relatively consistent difference between males and females. Male respondents were of the same mind: they took the activities seriously and judged them enormous fun, if somewhat tiring. Some females subjects shared this view. However, a more common female perspective was one of tolerant and rather derisive amusement, as if the activities in question were fine for the males (who predictably acted like little boys) but were hardly suitable for the mature women they took themselves to be.

Review of subject comments will begin with those male and female subjects whose account of orientation activities were positive.

[Roommate], [male] and I went out on the [residence] floor scavenger hunt. We found a dead squirrel just off Gordon Street. [Roommate] was the least squeamish about picking it up as he lives on a farm. Then we pulled a no parking sign out of the ground. We managed to get it back to [residence] without meeting any cops. Unfortunately, when we were taking the sign up the stairs, an RA met us and told us we couldn't have it in the building. [101M/D SE22].

After a great lunch at Derks, it is back home for a few hours sleep. My roommate, whose eyes are blood red, flops on the bed and for the next three hours we sleep, with no fire alarms or drunks! [116M/D SE09]. Dinner with the [other guys on the] floor again. I seem to be addicted to these guys. [116M/D SE10].

After this we got our 'frosh' kits, which contained a hard hat and t-shirt. We put these on. Innocently we walked outside to where the tractors were [waiting] for the panty raid. A couple of guys grabbed us and painted us green. I washed this off and came out again only to be repainted. This time they locked the washroom. The gathering of girls came next. We went all over the place stopping cars, picking up girls literally. Then it was off to the farm where there was free drinks and a huge fire. Never again will I drink so much. Like you know, it is against what I believe [as a Christian], and to tell you the truth I am sorry I drank, but not for the rest, as that was clean fun. [116M/D SE13].

At 4:00 [AM] I was awoken with a clatter ... [by] a volunteer. I was elected to play fun games. First, while I was not [yet] awake I dressed, then we played 2

strange games and got dive-bombed by water balloons, well some of us did. I saw them so I walked quickly past. Then we did a couple more things with all the kids (supposedly) on campus. Like twister. I got to bed at 6:30 [AM] then awoke to the shout of my RA's voice at 9:45 [AM] or so. FALL FROSH CHALLENGE began. The games were great, but we're especially proud of winning the clothes line. This was done at about 1:10 [PM] or so, then I took a second shower to get the whip cream out of my hair. [105F/D SE10].

Murder started today. You have a name and you have to 'kill' that person with no one in the lounge seeing you (unless they are already dead). I got killed already by my RA. Oh, well, at least I don't have to go around being cautious all the time now. [117F/D NV17]. Secret Santa started too. It's where you have a person of [the] opposite sex in your lounge and you give them notes and presents. If on Dec[ember] 5th they don't know its you who is their 'Santa', then they get a punishment. [117F/D NV21].

So I worked 'til just before 10:00 [PM], when [female] came around recruiting for the soccer game... I changed and away we went. When we got to the soccer field all we could do was laugh - the field was 2-inches deep gushy, wet mud! The whole field! ... But we played our game anyway. In the mud... After the game anyone who wasn't very dirty got picked up and rolled in the mud, and we had a giant mudfight. I haven't laughed so hard in a long time! We got pictures of everyone with mud in their hair, eyes, ears, on their clothes, everywhere! Hilarious! What a great time! [144F/D NV08].

Such vast amusement stands in sharp contrast to the responses of most other female subjects.

I went to the football game today with [female], her boyfriend and her younger brother. Most of the people had themselves all painted up and were incredibly drunk. It was scary waiting to get in because these people were pushing everyone around... It seemed to be a pretty rowdy night for the rest of the university, though. There was a lot of noise all through the night. The next morning there was broken glass all through the hallway. This place can be pretty scary. [119F/D SE24].

[Male 1] and [male 2] called this morning to get me up for Frosh Challenge. I didn't get up. I met them for lunch though... We spend a quiet after noon at [male 1's] room talking to [male 3]. We couldn't even be bothered with the Toga Parties. [133F/D SE10].

[Roommate] and I meandered from 4:15 to 5:00 [PM]. We went over to [residence] to try to find a frig, but the place was closed. The frosh there were involved in some sort of obstacle course. They had to roll a peanut butter jar along the ground with their nose, then crawl under some chairs, then hop up the stairs, then eat small marshmallows with their hands behind their backs, then do push-ups, then run backward up the stairs, then crab-walk, then run back to the starting place. It looked... well... it looked, OK? [113F/D SE10].

Such half-hearted praise may be explained by the range of things which routinely appeared to accompany orientation activities, especially noise, drunkenness and multiple (false) fire alarms.

Someone set off another fire extinguisher on the first floor [of the residence] and the stairwells up to about the 3d floor were full of chemicals - you couldn't walk through the hallways on 1st at all. That kind of immature behavior really gets under my skin. People can get hurt! [144F/D SE30].

So we left him and we went to the Toga [Party]. Again drunk slobbering people all over you. So we left and went to talk to people in [female's] room. The fire alarm went off 11 times tonight. I was really getting pissed off. We didn't go to sleep. We just sat up and drank beer and gabbed because we knew the alarm would be pulled again and there was no use going to sleep. [104F/D SE09]. Fire alarm. Fourth one tonight. They really bug me. Again I didn't get to bed until late. Some people didn't even go to sleep this weekend. I wonder how they are going to survive. [104F/D SE24].

What did bother me Monday is that it was quiet hour at 7 [PM] and people didn't shut up until 12:30 [AM]. I'm getting really mad about this. [104F/D OC03].

At 3:00 AM we got up ([all] 11 of us) and screamed and banged pots down [the] hall to prove a point to them that the noise has to stop. [117F/D NV06]. Just stayed around [other residence] all night. It was a really loud night, people breaking beer bottles in the hall, screaming and yelling. [117F/D NV12].

A related effect of such disorder was its impact on student's attempts to study in their room, often without success. However, for many, the alternative, the library, was not suitable either, not because of the noise, but rather due to the multitude of social distractions or the lack of same.

Tonight [female] came over to my room to study. She finds it very noisy where she lives (in residence), so she has to find alternate places to do her work. That seems to be the major problem [with] living in residence. Some people feel like partying loudly when you are trying to rest or so homework. You almost have to leave the building when you are working on something important. [119F/D SE12].

I did some research about two weeks before and I spent a lot of time in the basement of the library... Q: So you've pretty well given up trying to do any work in [your residence]? In the room, never. Unless it's like blindless work, like copying out notes in good copy. That's about normal. Q: 'Cause you sleep there and it's too social, and there's other people around. It is. And the radio's there. [112F/I DE01].

I did all my studying in my room. I can't really study anywhere else. I hate libraries! I went there to get answers for [course 1] and [course 2] a couple of times. Got that done and get out of there as fast as I could. I don't really know why, I don't find libraries conducive to studying. [113F/I DE16].

I've found it hard [to study] too. It's very easy to get distracted when you're living with a group of guys and maybe some guys are in the TV lounge watching TV and it's easy just to walk by and drop in and start talking to people and you start watching TV, or maybe some guys are throwing a football around. There's so many things you can get distracted by and I think if you're not willing, if you don't have the will to say, "Well, I've got to study," it's pretty hard [to get any work done]. [101M/I SE28]. If you really need to get something done, you just go to the library and it's quiet and you'll get the studying done. The only problem is the library has the effect on me, it'll put me to sleep after a while. [101M/I NV28].

The study room is about the only place that you can really do anything. Even with the 24-hour Quiet [rule], it's not, [well], I think it's so hard to be enforced because the RA, like you can be making noise and then the RA will come out and tell you to be quiet or who-

ever's walking by, and then as soon as they leave, OK, you go back to your work and then [it] get[s] loud again. So I think it's sort of self-defeating in a way for the RA to come out and keep telling you to be quiet when she could sort of put up with it a bit and keep doing more work. [161F/I DE13].

The combined result of this range of activities was that students distributed along a continuum. At one extreme were those, often male, who felt that by surviving orientation, they had somehow passed a crucial test and had thus been transformed from "frosh" into university students. At the other extreme were those, all female, who were repulsed, confused and overwhelmed by too many activities of the wrong sort occurring over too long an interval and at the wrong time of the year.

Now I'm no longer just a frosh. I'm a fully-fledged member of [residence], specifically [section]. The initiation was fun; I can think of many things worse than running through the campus in your [wet] underwear. [101M/D SE20].

Today was college day. I didn't go to any of the events with my college. I was too scared to go out alone and feel awkward. I walked around campus with my roommate from late morning until early afternoon. We were generally quite bored. We sat down in the U.C. and talked about how everyone expected you to party the whole first week of university. We just don't feel that way. It's such a big adjustment that most of the time I feel overwhelmed and exhausted. You have to be outgoing, meeting people, while at the same time getting used to a new lifestyle. [156F/D SE07].

Another sleepless night. This time because of the weather and my roomie next door crying. I was so tired. [156F/D OC18].

After reading this account of orientation, one is left with two strong impressions. The first is that orientation accomplished its stated purpose with some students, and that, because of their group character, these were more likely to be male than female. For some students, typically female, orientation as it is presently organized failed; it was more likely to be **disorienting**, and thus stressful, than the reverse. For these students, the frenetic pace was too rapid, the range of activities so wide as to be overwhelming, the type of activities inappropriate - they appeared to prefer activities involving dyads rather than groups - and the time interval so long as to be exhausting.

The second strong impression is that the size and diversity of residence house populations was such as make for a very demanding living environment. Despite quiet hours and the repeated intercession of Ra's,

noise of a sufficient volume to be intrusive, is nearly continuous.³⁹ In turn, this could have the specific effect of making it difficult to study in the residence room. More generally, it could also contribute to transitional stress in two ways: by disrupting students' prevailing sleep-wakefulness patterns, and by increasing the impression of 'difference' from what students had experienced previously.

Theme 29: Activity 2: Party Time. While formal orientation activities were restricted in time, partying went on throughout the entire semester, with parties most common at the end of each week, from Thursday to Sunday. Such parties could involve a varying number of persons, but were usually set in a residence room, almost invariably involved the consumption of alcohol and, when they did, would predictably involve one or more participants who drank to excess.

It is the last two characteristics of student parties that have been of special interest to researchers. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the available literature on undergraduate use and abuse of alcohol is massive and almost entirely based in the United States (eg., Banks & Smith, 1980; ; Cherry, 1987; Donovan et al., 1983; Fondalaro & Heller, 1983; Heatherington & Keene, 1985; Hashway et al., 1980; Matross & Hines, 1982; Shore et al., 1983; Shore & Rivers, 1985). For present purposes, **three** consistent findings stand out: (1) a high proportion of both men and women drink alcohol to excess on a regular basis; (2) men consistently drink more than women, and, concomitantly, are more susceptible to peer pressure to drink than their female counterparts; and (3) alcohol abuse is much more likely to be associated among men than women with various forms of antisocial behavior, typically the destruction of (university) property.⁴⁰ These general trends are reproduced in studies of Canadian undergraduate students (eg., Caleekal & Goodstadt, 1983); they diverge from their American counterparts only in proportion. For

³⁹ There were several exception among study subjects. However, without exception, they all lived in an all-female residence. This suggests that noise is more likely to be problematic in all-male or coeducational residences.

⁴⁰ Death through alcohol poisoning and/or alcohol-induced misadventure (eg., falling out an open residence window) is a rare but regular occurrence, including a recent such event at the University of Guelph.

example, a recent survey of nearly 5000 students in four Ontario (Canada) universities found that the vast majority of students drank moderately and responsibly, with 'only' 30% classified as 'problem' drinkers (Gliksman et al., 1988).⁴¹

These statistics must be cold comfort to university staff charged with the responsibility of somehow dealing with the consequences of the behavior of their 30% of their student body. As important, such data tells us nothing whatever about what it feels like, as freshmen, to have to adapt to a context a routine feature of which includes loud parties and drunken students. Subject comments provide precisely such insight. However, before reviewing their experience, it should be noted that although approximately 30% of subjects themselves got drunk on one or more occasions, as a group subjects were rather abstemious. Consequently, their comments are primarily useful in two respects: they deal with the reason(s) some students drank to excess, and they indicate what it felt like to be in the immediate or indirect presence of others who were drinking or had drunk to excess. Below, the experience of each of these groups will be explored in sequence, followed by a short series of related but secondary issues.

As for the few subjects who themselves got drunk, their accounts of these occasions were remarkable for being dry and matter of fact.

At 6:30 [PM], [male] phoned and we went to a party in his room. There I met [four other males]. I drank 7 shots of tequila in half an hour and spent 20 minutes trying to find my [residence] room at [about] 1:30 AM. [162F/D SE05].

I can remember their names [name], [name], [name], [and name] (a third year student who just dropped by bombed out of his mind. He told us his life story and then left). I usually don't drink that heavy but tequila became my friend that night. Oh, forgot to mention. I went to this party with one of my good friends from [Ontario city], [female]. [Female] got really drunk. She made an ass of herself, I thought. [104F/D SE05].

That night I spent going from party to party in [residence] and getting drunk... [Male] and I drank tequila together. He likes a lot of music I like... He reminds me a lot of a friend I had in high school. [101M/D SE06]. I had an interesting conversation with a second year student who had partied all last year (barely staying in the university). The topic was basically different methods of getting drunk and getting girls. He was apparently an expert in both areas. [101M/D SE07].

⁴¹ Students were classified as 'problem' drinkers if they self-reported consuming 15 or more one-once equivalent drinkers per week. In this study, 18% of respondents reported drinking 15-28 drinks per week while an additional 12% consumed more than 28 drinks per week.

These subjects then went on to explain that such behavior was unusual for them and that drinking was ancillary to having fun with friends. They also provide some interesting thoughts on why they think some (male) students drank to excess on a regular basis, and what the results looked (and smelt) like.

The entrance of [residence] is the only "safe" place in the building. As soon as we opened the second set of doors we were greeted with the terrible stench of stale beer. As we climbed the stairs to [male's] third floor room the amount of trash and broken bottles and smell increased significantly. Light fixtures were pulled out of the ceiling and I was asked twice if I wanted to go to bed with someone. We left quickly and returned to our own quiet residence. [162F/D SE06].

[Drinking a lot] isn't something I'm interested in anyway. Sure, I spend some evenings in bars with my friends, but we are talking and having a good time and we never, or I never, have more than one or two drinks in the evening. My friends don't drink a lot either. I've seen a lot of kids puking and making asses of themselves and it's not a very attractive sight. I think they just think they are out of their parents' sight and don't know how to limit themselves. Life is interesting; why fog it up that way? [162F/I SE26].

Yes, I've met a lot of kids that drink Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday, and it's just, holy cow, I don't know why. You keep up with the propaganda and stories on campus... People drink constantly here and you see it and I always go by the Keg down here and there's people here at lunch time drinking great big pitchers of beer during the week and I think that's not right. But I know a lot of kids that are constantly drinking and I know that there's a lot of floor parties in my residence where people are always walking around with a beer in their hand. And this is on Wednesday night, so you kind of think, what's going on? [104F/I DE01].

I felt a little flat after an exciting week. I also felt a little guilty about my drunken excesses of the previous night. Drinking and getting drunk is something I experienced a lot of in high school. However, I generally try and avoid totally losing control, especially being violently sick in front of people. [101M/D SE10].

We had a party on Saturday night, and that got out of hand. There were some people trying to knock out tiles in the ceiling in the hall, so the RA had to kind of clean things out. I've just come to accept, generally [that any damage during the weekend] gets cleaned up during the week. You just come to accept that, I think. It's not something I would put up with for years and years, but I think that [at the] stage of life I'm at... I don't find it too much of a problem right now. [101M/I SE28].

Such tolerance of the "drunken excesses" of others was not shared by those subjects who did not get drunk themselves but who, it should be noted, were by no means strangers to such behavior. They too offer a range of explanations for such (male) student behavior.

[My friend and I] both seem to be pretty shy about going out and getting drunk every night. I think part of this is because we did our fair share of that in high school and we've grown out of it. Another reason is that we both have serious boyfriends back home. There seems to be no real reason to party if I'm not with him. [119F/D SE08].

I really enjoy just sitting around and talking with people. More so than partying. It's not that I don't like to drink. I do sometimes, but not all the time. It seems to me that some people around here do it all the time. Perhaps they just feel insecure. It was after all the first night. [161F/D SE05].

My Dad turned me off drinking beause he drinks all the time. I guess he is an alcoholic. I don't like him always being drunk because he doesn't act himself. He acts so different, so that really turned me off alcohol. [105F/I SE15].

A lot of the guys, [well], it's frustrating because they've got to have a beer bottle in their hand to feel secure. Like, they left the teddy bear at home, you know what I mean. [161F/I SE15].

The other thing that I find kind of sad is the idea that some people feel they have to [drink] either to fit in or because they want to escape or to have fun or something like that. I always found that there's this thing in my high school that the best weekends you have are the ones you can't remember. And I say, "Now wait a sec. How can that be?!" Because if you can't remember them, you don't know how much fun they were. I like having a good time without relying on anything else. I'm certainly not adverse to having a couple of beers or a couple of glasses of wine at a party. And I've never been completely smashed, but I get very pleasantly buzzed a couple of times. But at the same time I find that it's a much nicer feeling to get 'high' on life than to get 'high' on anything else.... [113F/I SE15].

Such resistance to alcohol abuse, while it could call on philosophical reasoning, was primarily rooted in direct experience. At the university, much of such experience was unpleasant, as in the following.

[The males upstairs] came home at about 2:00 AM, as we were going to bed, so we got the definite pleasure of hearing [male] puke over the balcony. Oh joy! Oh bliss! I do so love going to sleep to the sound of puking. [113F/D SE27].

I had planned to stay in tonight and study for my mid-terms next week, but my roommate convinced me to go out with her and her friends. We sat in their room and drank, and then we went out to Derks'. I now hate that place. It was crowded, hot, and filled with drunken perverted men. Every time my roommate and I tried to leave, some guys would grab us and bring us back out onto the dance floor. We finally left and went back to our room. [119F/D SE30].

I talked to [roommate] and lay down for a few minutes. Thursday nights [in my residence] are wild!! I didn't get to sleep until 2:30 AM. Too much noise! [154F/D SE18].

He seems like a nice guy when he's sober, but it's so rare to see him sober. He threw a bottle of beer down the stairs and later threw one out of his door against the wall. It shattered everywhere! The halls are a mess. [161F/D SE24].

In the view of the following subject, one reason for the degree of drunkenness and antisocial behavior had to do with the fact that some residences contain only freshmen, without the levening effect of the presence of older students.

Another thing, one thing I don't agree with in this campus is that [residence 1] is all first years. It does not work at all. One thing that's worked out in [residence 2] is that you've got third year and second year students on the same floor and you can see their habits and what they're doing. And basically we follow them, they set an example. First year students in [residence 1], they don't have anybody to say, "Look, you should be doing this, you should be doing so many hours a week studying this course." But they don't have that. All they have is our people. Every time I've gone to [residence 1], [it] seems to be like a party house, especially on weekends. I think if people just watch older students, they get ideas of what they're supposed to be doing. [116F/I DE01].

As another subject explains, a further reason for such drunkenness early in the semester had to do with money.

Yeah, I think [money's] a big topic with everyone. Especially now, at the end of the semester. I think it'll just get worse at the end of the year, but right now everybody's just, "I don't have any more [meal] cards, I don't have any money, I can't eat!" That's how I was feeling a while ago. I sold quite a few meal cards because I thought I could use the money right now. Now it hits me that I don't have any meal cards left, which is a nice security. Then I thought I don't have any money to buy any food. Money is a big thing with everyone... At the beginning of the year, it used to be, "Let's go out!", "Yeah, sure! Now, it's, "Let's go out! I don't have any money. Neither do I. Let's just stay in." A lot of people stay in a lot more [now]. [133F/I DE14].

Finally, as problematic as drinking could be for the majority of subjects, it was especially difficult for those who were underage, that is, under 19 years of age, the drinking limit in Ontario. In their view, the limit in question effectively and unjustly prohibited them from being with their friends, especially in formal drinking places (eg., pubs, bars) simply because alcohol was being served and irrespective of their drinking preferences.

It's sort of hard for me 'cause I'm only [...]. Usually, if everybody's going out, I can't really go. It's sort of hard. When I was going home every weekend, I always went out. But here, it's hard. We go to movies on Sunday night. [147F/I DE01].

So [female] came over and took him out and showed him the bars on campus because she is of age and I'm not. (That sucks because I don't want to get drunk. I just want to go sit with my friends and dance and listen to the music.) [104F/D SE18].

My friends and I at home never drank that much unless it was a special occasion, so it never really bothered me before. But here, you miss out on a LOT of the socializing just because you're a few weeks away from being 19... I'm not one for getting drunk, but it's a shame that I miss out on going dancing or just sitting in a pub with a friend sharing a beer. [148F/D SE08].

These data cannot speak to the extent to which alcohol use was a problem on campus, nor do they provide any basis upon which to assess subjects' explanations regarding the reasons students, especially

males, drank to excess. They are clear, however, with regard to two things. First, it is abundantly clear that 'party time', including drinking to excess, does nothing whatever to facilitate freshman student adjustment nor to alleviate any problems they might have with transitional stress. Psychologically, it may repulse or frighten students either not accustomed to it or uncomfortable in its presence. It may also have an insidious effect by increasing students' tolerance for such behavior and by leaving them feeling powerless to act as their residence is (temporarily) being destroyed; as in a previous comment, such behavior becomes the responsibility of someone else, such as the RA, who can claim official authority. Physically, it can have the effect of depriving students of much needed sleep and, in the case of those students who themselves get drunk, it can render them temporarily unfit for any sort of academic work. The claim that partying is both a reasonable form of social activity and that it can provide some form of tension release may have merit. As we have seen, however, this need not lead to drunken excess.

Second, these data confirm what is already apparent in the literature, namely, that men and women handle alcohol quite differently. Not only are women less likely to drink to excess - at least on a proportional basis - they are much less likely to act out their stress or tension through antisocial behavior, using alcohol as a convenient excuse. In turn, this raises but fails to answer, a series of related issues, including: the advisability of having all-male all-freshman residence halls; the gender basis of variation in susceptibility to peer pressure; the role of pre-entry expectations regarding alcohol availability and use; and, the gender basis of social relations that involve face-to-face versus large group activity.

Theme 30: Control Over Private Space 1: Social Contact. Proponents of territorial theory, such as Schroeder (1978), argue that there is an important relationship between stress management and control over private space, especially as regards social contact. When control is high, stress related to a sense of crowding is likely to be low; when control is low, crowding stress is likely to be high.

Study data were consistent with this formulation. Diary ratings, for example, indicated that of those subjects living in residence, 46% experienced their floormates as socially intrusive.⁴² Complementary results derive from subject comments. For example, several subjects reported some annoyance with the intrusiveness of floormates, but were generally satisfied at receiving their attention.

If your door's open, [floormates] come down and knock on your door and say, "Hi, how are you?" I know people that live in [other residence] who say, "I would never leave my door open! There'd be people coming in and stealing things." Like if you go to the bathroom, I always leave my door open. I never shut it. Go to the bathroom, come back, there'll be people sitting in your room. But I don't have to worry about them taking anything. It's good. [162F/I DE05].

It would be good to have a room to myself because it's less distraction... Lately, we've been watching TV. I'm a soap [opera] addict... My bed's a couch. We have about 4 or 5 people on it and that's what we do, we have TV parties. It's fun. [126F/I DE01].

I got back to my room and left my door open which meant anyone could walk in and they did! [Female 1] and [female 2] came by, then [female 3], then [female 4]. I don't mind. I actually like the idea that they're all comfortable in my room. [161F/D SE13].

Such ambivalence was not typical. A more common response was one of marked annoyance and frustration at the distractions produced by social intrusion. Note, however, that such frustration was nearly always an internal response; very few subjects ever said anything about it to anyone else and even fewer did anything concrete about preventing such intrusion in the future.

[Roommate] has become a socialite. It's really quite funny, especially considering what she was like at the beginning of the semester. Now there are almost always people (mostly males ones) in the room when she's here. It can get very distracting sometimes, especially when I'm trying to work or sleep and there are a lot of them there. But it hasn't bothered me too much. I do feel badly sometimes that I'm always shut up in [my room] when people are here. It's not that I don't want to talk to them, it's just that I'm usually in the middle of something, or on my way to bed. These people often stay up until 3 or 4 in the morning! Ugh! [113F/D NV06].

You can't study with that noise and my roommate's been driving me insane because she's got all these friends that live off campus who don't go to school visiting her, so you kind of feel obliged to entertain them and people are always coming in and out of our room all the time and it just drove me bananas. Last night I was ready to go insane. I was going to go down the hall to another girl's room. She has a single, she's usually quiet and I study with her a lot and my roommate begged me to stay in the room because her friend was

⁴² This is likely an underestimate, for it includes three subjects who lived in single rooms and thus were less subject to intrusion than their double-room counterparts. Restricting this variable to subjects who lived in doubles or quads raises the proportion who indicates that their floormates were intrusive to 60%.

going to call her so she could go watch TV. So I did and her friends didn't even call her until 12:30 at night and I was so mad; I could have gone somewhere to read. [104F/I DE04].

[Male] brought a TV from home. Bad mistake. Every night, people take over the room to watch TV. It's a great chance to talk but we are certainly not getting much work done. [133F/I SE20].

At present, [subject] feels "like a bomb about to go off". She hates the pressure created by the lack of privacy - she needs (and loves) solitude. She likes to read on her bed (but can't due to "company") and now hates "U2" (roommate's loud music is always on) - her nerves are frazzled. Most of her problem stems from her living arrangements: the nerf basketball hoop/game in her double room attracts company at all hours. Her roommate, [name], enjoys the social side of life too much and often has 8 to 12 visitors over at 11:30 PM (three lying on her bed). [Subject] likes to go to bed by 11 [PM] and loves privacy (none here!) - this has gone on for weeks and [subject] got angry and withdrew from [roommate]. [buddy of 112F/I OC28].

An especially problematic variation of social intrusion involved one roommate evicting the other in order that she or he could spend time alone with their romantic partner.

When I got to [my room], [male] was in the top bunk (he sometimes stays in our room when his roommate's girlfriend is over). [101M/D OC20].

He was telling me that one girl [in his residence] is having problems with her roommate, who kicks her out when she has her boyfriend over for the night. Hmmm. [113F/D SE14].

[Male] from [residence] went to sleep on my roommate's bed (she was gone for the weekend) because his roommate was engaging in sexual activities. Poor guy. He asked for a transfer I think. I hope he gets it. He told me he has only slept in his bed one night the whole frosh week. [104F/D SE09].

The rest of the night I partied and then crash out in [female's] room - because I got kicked out of my own [room], because [roommate] and her boyfriend wanted to be alone. [104F/D SE22].

These data speak to three issues, all encountered before. First, it adds some additional evidence to what we have already learned about roommate relations. In the literature, the search for the key to roommate compatibility has focused on the congruence between individual attributes. Subject data (see above, Domain 2) suggests shifting the focus from individuals to relations among them, and notes too the involvement of others, such as romantic others. Here, we see evidence that floormates, the acquaintances of roommates, and indeed perfect strangers, can also intrude into relations between roommates. While such intrusion was sometimes welcomed - thus disqualifying their intrusive qualities - more often it appeared to potentiate pre-existing sources of tension and conflict.

Second, the intrusion of others, however benign in intent, nevertheless served to create a sense of crowding stress among many subjects. What appeared especially critical here was that it violated subjects' sense of their personal space. Thus, what was usually considered *mine*, such as *my* bed or *my* desk, suddenly and unexpectedly came to be treated *as if* it were in the public domain.

Finally, this account provides yet more evidence of cross-linkage. Control over private space is theoretically a simple matter. It merely requires that subjects establish and enforce some set of rules which specify when others may visit and when they may not. Indeed, the "open door" rule worked in precisely this manner. However, the evidence that it did not stand alone. Rather, it was mediated by a covert, higher-order *metarule* which stated that anyone who leaves their door closed is antisocial. Even so, subjects still had the option of simply asking people to leave or negotiating some such rule with their roommates.

However, this falsely assumes that all subjects shared an equally high level of social self-esteem; as we have learned previously, they did not. Indeed, most subjects were rated low on this variable. Consequently, however much they appeared to complain about intrusion, they were, in practice, often unable to enact their desires. This was because the good opinion of others (including their roommates) was just too important to them to risk having it damaged. This placed subjects squarely on the horns of dilemma: they could live with a level of intrusion they found aversive or they could enact their desires and thus risk the possibility of social isolation that they would similarly have found aversive. Most subjects apparently choose the former alternative, albeit at considerable cost.

One such 'cost' concerned the adverse effects enforced sociability had on academic performance, especially studying. Another concerned the likelihood of some more lost sleep. Indeed, taken together, these data serve to confirm and elaborate on an earlier formulation (see Theme 2) in which fatigue, weight loss, illness and academic demand were seen as representing parts of a single feedback loop. In this earlier view, it was implied that the process was driven by academic demand. Given what we have now learned about the central relevance of significant others, the current findings concerning social intrusion support *two* inferences.

First, despite the academic character of the university as living environment, it now appears that academic demand is, in practice, mediated by social process, at least among freshman students. For study subjects, academic requirements did not stand alone; rather, they were heavily qualified by the compelling demands and the equally compelling rewards of social interaction. Doing academic work was seldom satisfying for its own sake. More typically, it was assessed in terms of what it would mean in terms of social processes, including lost opportunities for 'goofing off' with friends, for spending time with one's romantic other, for living up to the expectations of parents or for gaining reinforcement for a changing but insecurely held sense of social self-esteem.

Second, these data tend to confirm the feedback relationship between the elements in question, and, in particular, call increasing attention to the *tension* which derives from the competing demands of subjects' academic and social lives. In striving to lead 'balanced' lives, subjects repeatedly confronted the necessity of deliberately selecting how to use the time available to them. No matter what their choice, it invariably meant time away from some salient alternative activity, whether it be academic work or social interaction. As freshmen, necessarily lacking discipline born of experience, few subjects succeeded in achieving a workable arrangement, free of tension. Rather, they often became victims of that tension, for example, having work tied to a deadline but nevertheless unable to refuse the intrusive offer of a night watching soap operas or playing nerf basketball. Thus, social dynamics can now be seen as the central process underlying a feedback loop in which social interaction reduced the time available for academic work and thus contributed to the stress associated with that work. This promoted stress-induced illness, missed meals and chronic fatigue, as subjects tried to compensate either in energy for what they lacked in hours or in hours for what they lacked in balance. In turn, this operated to heighten tension-induced stress, on the one hand, with social interaction they dared not refuse but felt guilty and resentful accepting, and, on the other hand, with academic work they had to complete but felt angry and distracted in doing, since it necessarily absented them from preferred social activity.

Theme 31: Control Over Private Space 2: Home. Schroeder (1978) notes another dimension of control over private space, namely, control over the decor and organization of ones residence room.

Relevant research has shown, for example, that allowing undergraduate students to personalize their room (eg., colour, decor, furniture placement, etc.) produced a significant increase in persistence and academic achievement, and a significant reduction (by 82%) in room damage over three years (Schroeder, 1976). Similarly, Hansen and Altman (1976) found that the number and variety of room decorations were directly related to student persistence.

These data may be interpreted in at least two ways. First, they may be taken as support for the notion of territoriality, a view with which Schroeder (1980) would no doubt agree. Second, they may also be seen as consistent with Astin's (1984) involvement theory which holds, in essence, that student academic and social involvement is directly related both to student development and persistence (see Abrahamowitz, 1988).

The comments of **female subjects alone** suggest a third interpretation which they called "**home**". This was used in two quite different senses. In the first usage, it refers to the creation of a homey atmosphere, as in the use of room decorations (hereafter known as HOME). In the second usage, it refers to recreation of a context in which students feel truly understood and thus free to be themselves, as in the similar use and sharing of context markers (hereafter known as **home**). As will shortly become apparent, the first usage can be seen as complementary to either territoriality or involvement. The second usage, however, contradicts both models and, indeed, can be used to recast both formulations in a new light.

The following comments concentrate on the first usage, that of HOME as in decor. As subjects explain, decorating their room so that it was reminiscent of their room back home was essential to their feeling comfortable at the university.

I brought about 14 or 15 boxes. I am such a pack-rat. My home has to be my home or I don't feel good... I have all my plants and stuffed toys in my room and my sewing table and my clothes are in there too. I just like little knick-knacks and stuff... I love my room. [105F/I SE15].

Started decorating my room. My [...] and [...] posters really make me feel like I'm back at home in my little room. I love it. [120F/D SE13].

My touches of home: five stuffed animals [...], some posters, a picture of a [...] from my stepfather, pictures of my cats, a picture of a friend in [city], MANY pictures of [boyfriend], all of his letters to me, tapes, books, a duvet, a special blanket and a pillow. I LIKE this room! I'm, going to have FUN here! [113F/D SE06].

As soon as I opened the door, relief filled my heart. The room was huge! Much bigger than I had remembered. It was the best surprise I could have hoped for. I jumped around, mentally noting where all my stuffed animals and pictures would go, never shutting up about how big the room was ... I spent the afternoon claiming my territory, organizing my room and chatting with [roommate]. [112F/D SE12].

Conversely, those who, for some reason, were unable to "claim their territory" could quickly come to find their room intolerable. Even so, these subjects had such respect for HOME that they were unable to comprehend how others, especially males, could have no such respect.

[My father] was told I was in room [number] of [residence]. I was happy with that, but when I arrived I found out that my room is temporary. Four of us (two have not shown yet!) are in a study room. The phone only just arrived (and will work in an hour), there are three desks (cubicles!), three lights (one works!) and a few drawers. I need to set [down] some "roots". I feel completely out of place because it seems more like camp and I'll be going home in a few weeks (right now I wish I was). I need to be able to unpack my things, set up my desk, put up posters, and make this [room] my home. [154F/D SE06].

I find that there is a lot of violence around, people destroying things. What I found really surprising is that when people come here to live, they don't see it as their home. They just open a window and throw their garbage out sometimes. And I just sit there and go, "why would they do that?" [133F/I DE14].

Turning to home as shared meanings, subjects' comments make clear that, as hard as they tried, most had not succeeded in reestablishing such close relations with others as they had had with people back home.

[Home is] be[ing] able to be totally comfortable with everybody around at home. Be[ing] able to completely relax. [144F/I NV21].

I've made some good friends [here]. But I feel like I have to work at it to keep them up, like you can't just not call somebody for a couple of days. I feel like if I do that, they're going to be gone. Whereas friends that you have forever, you don't have to call them and you'll still be friends. [123F/I DE07].

Good to be home - treated special, with people who know you. No need to explain yourself or worrying of dwelling in misery because no one reads your cues [112F/D SE30]. Felt more comfortable at home. Saw girlfriend [name] (friends since age 7) which brought back some of my identity (we know how much we mean to each other). Again, felt secure knowing didn't have to explain myself to [female]. She understands me, knows what makes me tick. Biggest difference in university if [you] don't have a good friend with you, [you] get sick of explaining yourself [to others]. [112F/D OC07].

The importance of the **absence** of someone who "understands me" was not always immediately apparent. When it eventually did bubble up to consciousness, the results could be traumatic.

I have "discovered" loneliness in the past few weeks, as a combination of [roommate's] increased sociability, increased workload, and having gone home for Thanksgiving. Every now and then, I really miss having someone HERE whom I can talk to easily, whenever I want or need to. [Boyfriend] and I call each other at least three or four times a week. [113F/D NV06].

The first couple of weeks weren't a problem for me at all because I was on such a high of being here that everything was new and exciting as opposed to being frightening. Around about the middle of October, after coming back from Thanksgiving, I got onto a real, "Boy, am I homesick!" Not so much for physical home, but just having friends around that I've known for more than four weeks! People who knew how I thought and how I worked and what things bugged me and that I could just sit down and talk for hours about absolutely nothing with. I found that that's the biggest thing here, is getting used to the fact that there aren't any really close friends here. [113F/I DE16].

Data concerning 'home' (in either sense) call attention to **three** issues. First, they make abundantly clear that, for women, "claiming their territory" by decorating their room was no mere sentimental nicety. It was critical to their adjustment to the university, for without this opportunity to create a HOME, they felt rootless, a state of mind antithetical to serious academic work. There was more here than merely matters of familiarity and security, though both clearly applied. Rather, what seems central to this 'claiming' process was the sense that their private space was tied up with their private sense of self, their identity. This suggests that for these students, decorating their room was their way of saying, "See, this is who I am." Concomitantly, this helps explain why women would be flattered by floormate social intrusion (see above, **Theme 29**), for it suggested a degree of mutual acceptance and understanding.

Second, by omission, these data call attention to another example of a gender difference. Noting an emphasis on decor among female students, male diaries and interviews were re-inspected in vain for similar data; while male subjects may or may not have made some effort to 'claim' their room, they certainly never talked about it. This suggests that men may conceptualize their living space in a way quite different than women, an inference, incidentally, consistent with their different ways of relating to same-sex friends, the women in one-on-one relations, the men in groups.

Third, these data speak to the unintended consequences associated with random room assignment, especially as regards the three student subjects assigned to single rooms. Here, the focus is less on either social intrusion or HOME, as on the fit between assignment and social competence. Where the fit was a good one, such an assignment was either benign or beneficial. In one instance, a subject requested a transfer to a single room in order to have more time alone with her boyfriend. In a second instance, the subject was accustomed to spending much time alone in her room. For her, a single room was a continuation of a previous pattern. However, before she moved into her room, she was first placed in a temporary room where she could never "put down roots". For her, the need to create a "home" was no passing fancy, but rather an instrumental necessity without which concentrated study would have been impossible. It is quite likely that this temporary placement slowed her adjustment to campus life.

Not all single room assignments worked out so well, for when the match was poor the results could be traumatic. In the case of a third subject, such an assignment was a disaster. Gregarious, accustomed to frequent social interaction but dependent and rather shy, this was a woman who needed the social support provided by a roommate. In the absence of such another, she was left alone and isolated, condemned (temporarily) to solitary bouts of crying, especially on weekends. Her diary was so filled with pain and sorrow as to be a very difficult document to read. By the end of the semester, however, she had adjusted reasonably well, but there is little doubt that a single room assignment slowed her adjustment to university life.

Turning to data regarding *home*, we see evidence that *home* involves a good deal more than a room full of plants and posters. Rather, it refers to the recreation of a shared meaning system in which mutual knowledge and trust is such as to allow the participants to relax and 'just' be themselves. It is also one in which continual effort to explain the self to the other is no longer required. These qualities of "good friends" were largely absent from the lives of female subjects and it was an absence sorely missed by many. The need for *home* speaks too to the models of territoriality and involvement by helping to identify their failings. Both models claim limited explained variance. This suggests that there are processes or variables at work in persistence, performance and satisfaction which are not taken into account by either model. *Home* would

appear to be just such a generic factor, and reaffirms the critical importance of significant others back home, especially family members and old old friends as well as particular others, such as old new friends, available on campus.

Theme 32: Residence Assistants. There is an additional set of actors in residence that have yet to be formally acknowledged here, namely, the **residence assistants** or **RAs**. To date, formal research on this topic has been largely confined to **three** issues: hiring practices, evaluation procedures and the sorts of problems students bring to RAs (Benjamin, 1988b).

While useful, these data are problematic since they are typically derived from RAs and others higher up in the university administration; student's perception of RA performance has been underemphasized.

In the present context, student subjects did not comment with any frequency or depth about their contact with RAs. The comments that are available fall roughly into **five** categories concerned, respectively, with **instrumental aid, rule enforcement, information aid, social interaction, and overall assessment**.

Instrumental aids covers a wide range of activities that RAs performed all of which were geared to making life a little easier for residence students, as the following comments attest.

Today was the official Homecoming Day. I saw [male] off in the morning and returned to [residence]. The RAs cooked us breakfast; I managed to get something to eat before they finished. Some people had begun drinking already, but I didn't feel up to it yet. [101M/D SE24].

Well... I did find some sort of help for [male who attempted suicide]. I figured it would be better for him to get help - hate me for life - than for me to go to a funeral. I talked to my RA about the ordeal that happened on Tuesday. She talked to [name], my Program Director at [residence] (this is where [male] lives). So I hope someone can help him. He needs it and it's beyond our control as friends. [104F/D SE29].

At about 5:30 [PM] I went out with my friend. I wasn't eating, just keeping company. But I locked my keys in my room. I went and found my RA then got my keys out of my room. My friend was then coming out, so we left and I got one of the two books I needed. [105F/D SE11].

Next, rule enforcement could be a problematic task for RAs who are often not much older than they residents whose behavior they seek to monitor and control. In some cases, students tried to help by

failing to call on the RA, either because they did not want to wake her or because they did not think that she would be effective.

At 12:30 [AM], there were loud guys out in the hall bothering [three females] and company. They were banging on doors and being really obnoxious. I called [name], our RA. They guys left when she came. [134F/D OC04].

At 3:15 AM I was awakened by the girls who live above us. They were throwing things at each other, and fighting, and one was yelling at the top of her lungs while the other one balled her eyes out. It was absolutely ridiculous. It was impossible for either [roommate] or I to sleep, and they continued to fight until 4:30 AM. [Roommate] considered going to their room and asking them to be quiet, but she was afraid she might get something thrown at her. We honestly wouldn't have been surprised if one of them had killed the other. We also considered telling [name], our RA, but we realized that she would be sleeping, so we just had to put up with it. [147F/D SE28].

So, I got up and went to the lounge. [Male] gave me a drink and we sat around and talked. It was past quiet hour and we were making lots of noise. [RA] came out and asked us to be quiet but we didn't really listen to her. [161F/D SE13].

As for information aid, this was typically a student problem only at the beginning of the semester, when everything was still strange and everyone was still new.

I'm confused by the maze-like structure of [...] residence but [name] my RA untangled some of my confusion. [133F/D SE05].

Next, the social relations between RAs and students could be problematic. As already noted, the age differentials between RAs and students is often not great. Further, coeducational residences can mean that a male RA may have responsibility for female students. Both of these factors could lead to complications in Ra-student interaction, as the following comments suggest.

[RA] walked in around 12:30 [AM] sort of staggering. Some of her friends brought her home. She was out celebrating her [...] birthday. She had a great time. She was a little embarrassed that people from her lounge saw her like that. She really takes her job as RA seriously and is afraid that if people find out about her age [they] won't take her seriously. We all tried to reassure her that her age doesn't matter. We know she is competent. She's been through it all already. [161F/D SE20].

We partied a lot but I started to notice [RA] was coming on a bit too strong. I thought he was my friend. Not my lover. I asked [roommate] if I'd done anything to lead him on but she said no. He knows I have a boyfriend [back home]. He met [boyfriend]. I tried to hide from him 'cos I was scared. At 12:00 [AM] I phoned [boyfriend]. I told him about [RA] and he was mad. I told him I hoped it was just 'cos he was drunk. I hope that's all. [147F/D SE16]. I was still pretty worried about [RA] today. We spoke for a little while in his room about what's happened. He doesn't seem to want to be a bad guy, but the fact is he was!! He kept saying things like, "You've got to give me more credit than that." or "We're both

mature...." and then he expected everything to be OK. But it's not. I don't think I'll ever be able to look at him straight in the face anymore." [147F/D SE17].

So, I was kind of depressed last night and then the homesickness starts and everything. And my roommate (THIS IS CONFIDENTIAL, RIGHT?) she is seeing the RA. You're not really supposed to I don't think... I like the guy, and he's really a nice guy, but I felt kind of lonely last night and I wanted to talk to her ... and so I was like crying last night, I was in such a bad mood. So, they're in there, and I'm just lying on my bed and [RA] comes out, 'cause she's getting changed or something, and he goes, "So how are you doing?" and I was, like, "Whaaaaaat?" You know, it's his JOB to counsel these poor little frosh who are homesick, so he's going, "What's wrong? You know, I want to talk to you about it." and I didn't want to talk to him, just 'cause I knew that he just wanted to talk to me 'cause it's his job, and I HATE that!! [123F/I SE19].

I want to be honest with [RA] and I want to put things back to where they were a few weeks ago. I also want someone I can go to when I need a hug. I guess what I want is for [RA] to be a very special friend and really nothing more. But I do need him for that much and, really, that is his job as an RA, so there you go. [120F/D OC12].

In light of these revelations, it was hardly surprising that subjects should be split in their overall assessment of the RAs they had known.

You talked about RAs. I think that's a pretty good system. I think the residence system is really good. We've got two RAs on our floor. I really get along with them well. Especially [name], he's the one whose closer in terms of where he is on the floor. They're third year guys and they seem fairly responsible... It's not Animal House because, in the sense [that] people can't party in the hall beyond a certain hour and they really enforce that. There is such a thing as quiet hours. And they are enforced. If you don't want to be in a place where there's a party going on...if you want to stay in your room, you won't be bothered, at a certain hour at least, at least you have a chance to get your sleep, studying or whatever the case may be. So I think the residence system is pretty good. [101M/I NV28].

I think some of the RAs are totally useless at their jobs. They don't patrol the floor. We've complained so many times. I'm surprised half those people haven't been kicked out of residence yet. [104F/I DE04].

On the one hand, these data suggest that RAs provided residence student with very real practical assistance. Much of this touched on mundane matters, but, on occasion, their intervention could be life saving. On the other hand, their efforts were not always effective since at least some resident students refused to acknowledge their authority. Coeducational residences could also pose special problems, with 'powerful' male RAs coming into regular contact with relatively needy female freshmen. That the occasional RA should find the temptations irresistible should hardly be surprising, however reprehensible the behavior.

These pros and cons notwithstanding, the most salient finding was in fact noteworthy by omission. This refers to the fact that RAs appeared seldom and only fleetingly in subject diaries, and they had relatively to say about them when asked directly in interview. It would appear, at least on the basis on these subejcts, that RAs had relatively little direct impact on the daily experience of freshman students. As likely as not, this probably speaks highly of their efficiency, as they did their job quietly but invisibly in the background.

Discussion

The residence life system involves an extremely complex environment, a statment which subject comments suggest was true on several different levels at once. First, residence systems had both exclusionary and connective properties. Population size, environmental characteristics and academic demand combined to make much of the university campus unsuitable for the formation of friendship relationships. Conversely, funnelling processes, such as interaction frequency, residential proximity, attribute similarity and HOME, combined to make residential students inordinately dependent on their floor, especially their room, as the place to meet, make friends and socialize with others. Consequently, for better or worse, the residence room was likely to be the one place where most residential students spent most of their out-of-class time.

Second, such dependence on a single locus tended to concentrate attention on the capacity of the environment and of the people in it to provide each other with support while simultaneously making a range of demands. Support derived from activities such as orientation and partying which were intended to bring people together with the ultimate aim of the evolution of community. Additional support evolved out of room personalization (HOME), respect for private space, comfortable intrusion, and, when needed, the formal support of RAs.

Without exception, however, these and related processes could become sources of demand. Childish orientation "games" and wild, drunken, destructive parties becamas sources of disorder, taking their toll in terms of emotional disruption, lost sleep and the accentuation of difference. Similarly, social intrusiveness,

room assignments which prohibited HOME activities, the absence of **home**, and problematic relations with RAs intensified rather than lessened transitional stress and could, in consequence, slow adjustment.

Third, student responses to these range of events and processes was characterized by **variation**. At one extreme were those "party animals" who loved the excitement, fun and camaraderie of residence life. At the other extreme were those already suffering moderate to high homesickness for whom such events and processes constituted additional sources of distress. A major source of such variation was rooted in **gender**. Serious involvement in orientation activities, participation in parties characterized by drunkenness and antisocial behavior, and a preference for group-based relationships, were more likely to characterize male than female freshmen. Similarly, males appeared to express little need for HOME and indicated no distress resulting from the lack of **home**. Conversely, female freshmen tended to prefer face-to-face relationships, drank moderately and seldom to excess, rarely engaged in antisocial activities, and participated in orientation activities but without taking them very seriously; for a minority, orientation could actually be **disorienting**. Females too expressed a specific need to recreate HOME and pined for the absence of **home**.

On the one hand, residence life disorder was more likely to produce adverse effects among female than male freshman students. On the other hand, female freshmen were more likely to have a wider array of support resources than their male counterparts.

Finally, there was scattered but substantial evidence of cross-linkage between residence life and other domains. The processes of HOME and **home** speak to self-esteem and academic performance. Activities such as orientation and party time speak to such psychophysiological processes as fatigue, sleep disturbance and adequate nutrition. Social intrusion speaks to peer relations and academic performance.

Subdomain: UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

Theme 33: Security Fears. The university campus per se has been the subject of research within several ecological models (see Benjamin, 1986). However, it has not been the focus of concern among those concerned with freshman transition.

Among female study subjects, one aspect of their perception of the campus as a whole concerned their fear of sexual assault. This was rated as present for just over one third (38%) of all female subjects. Subject comments elaborate on such fears in **three** ways: what such fears felt like, where they originated, and what certain students had done to help counteract such fears.

As to the fears themselves, subjects expressed themselves graphically on this matter.

Tonight I went with my house on a trip to the Whippletree [Restaurant]. I had a great time because I got to meet some of the other girls in the house. After, we went to the Bullring. At about 11:00 PM, some girls started to leave, but they were leaving by themselves. Even my RA left by herself. I did not want to walk home alone, so a friend of mine named [male] said he would walk me back to the residence. Once we got to the entrance, I told him I would be fine from there, so he left. Then a guy followed me. I had never seen this guy before, so I went up to [male's] room. [The guy following me] walked past, and I thought he was gone, so I walked back to my room. He had waited, and followed me back. I locked the door and stayed in my room. Then I phoned [female] and talked to her until I felt more safe. [119F/D SE28].

I'll have to learn to discipline myself or else go to the library if I have studying to do. Going to the library or anywhere alone at night is one of my big concerns. We heard about a rape that occurred sometime last week; the lighting on campus at night is so poor. It's so dark and there are so many trees that no girl should be out by themselves late at night, but I guess that if you have studying to do, it's a risk you have to take. [147F/D SE20].

It is a nice night out. I love looking at the stars. It is scary being a girl because you are so vulnerable. I am glad I don't have any late classes. Being part of the university is like being part of a small community and it is hard to imagine that there are people out there who want to attack you. I guess I have a false sense of security being from a small town and the university seems so nice and friendly. [143F/D SE14].

Such fears, it seems, originated with residence life staff and was subsequently reinforced by students.

Just the regular house meeting. They told us about the "four rapes on campus" stuff. [104F/D OC03]. It's pretty bad, I think, and there's posters all over residence - don't walk home alone, have a buddy system - and they are really, really stressing it, and every time we have a house meeting they stress it.... [104F/I DE01].

When we got back to university, we found out that a girl had been raped on the weekend over by [residence]. That really increased my fear of living by myself. I have a steadily growing fear that I may be attacked or hurt. When you are living on your own, you have to take care of yourself, and you are really the only person who will help you if you get hurt or something happens. [119F/D SE18].

Her house mates get really upset if she is out after dark by herself. She supposes they are right about that because there are a lot of rumors and a friend of hers got really sexually hassled on the stairs to the women's john in Derk's last week; even a few steps up you can't be seen from below. [buddy of 162F/I OC24].

One way to combat such fear is, as the posters advertised, by creating a "buddy system" in which male residents escorted their female housemates back from night classes. The other, more ominous solution was to begin skipping night classes altogether.

They mentioned that the guys would be forming an escort service for girls to go to their night classes. This sounds very reassuring. I've heard a lot of rumours-truth about rapes this year and last. I've heard that the police basically did nothing about the ones last year. Is this true? I'd like to get another side's version of this story. [113F/D SE29].

I walked down to [female's] room and asked if either her or [her roommate] wanted to go to the library with me. Realizing that it is foolish to walk alone in the dark, I did not go. Instead I stayed in [female's] room. [Her roommate] helped me a tiny bit with my [course] and she made popcorn. [134F/D SE15].

My [course] is a night course which I don't go to that often because it's really hard trying to find someone to walk me back. [104F/I DE01].

While such fear of sexual assault was rated as significant among only a minority of female subjects, for these subjects its immediate result was to directly alter their lifestyle. Subjects who might have liked to walk alone at night gazing at the stars refrained from doing so. Some even skipped some classes if return escorts were not assured. The benefit of such uncertainty was to encourage floormates to rely on and support each other. On balance, however, it appeared that such minor gains were largely offset by the extent to which subjects' fear and anxiety undermined their initial perception that the campus was a "nice and friendly" place to work and socialize.

Theme 34: Beautiful Campus. In sharp contrast with subjects' fears of sexual assault was their thorough appreciation for the physical beauty of the Guelph campus. In the following comments, subjects not only characterize that beauty as a source of relaxation and tension release, but also as one of the elements which attracted them (and their parents) to the university in the first place.

One more thing! Guelph, the campus, it is so pretty. I really like the surroundings. Today, walking down to classes was so pretty! [154F/D SE16].

So that was about November and the trees were turning, and the cobblestone walkways. I just fell in love with it. I didn't even go to any other university for a tour. I said, "this is my place to be and that's it." [112F/I SE29].

I like places with character and York [University] doesn't have any - like, it's got big buildings! Here, it's so beautiful - I came and I checked it out and I just loved it! Like, this is it - this is my home - my mother liked it - I brought her up here. [126F/I SE27]. We got back to the university. It is so beautiful outside. We wish we didn't have to stay inside to do work. It isn't fair. People in most other occupations have at least two days off a week to relax. We have none that we can take off completely. Although I occasionally do some weekends. As a result, I have to catch up on work. I wish I could go riding over the green lawns of the campus.

There was, however, one draw-back to all this beauty. It was spread over a very large campus. Consequently, an unanticipated consequence of coupling assignment to a given residence with a given course schedule was that it could require a great deal of walking.

Sometimes [subject] is physically tired. So much distance to walk, and she goes for pleasure walks too because the campus is so beautiful. [buddy of 162F/I OC13].

These data are relevant in two respects. First, the physical beauty of the campus was one of the few themes that is entirely positive. It provided students with a means of relaxation and tension relief and required no further effort than to go outside and what about in the sunshine.

This said, it is noteworthy that the only subjects who took notice of the campus in this way were female. This was no accident, for it is now evident that it is part of a larger pattern of related gender differences. For example, females inquired into the interior of others they called friends; males did not. Females were vitally interested in establishing HOME away from home; males were not. Females took note of the absence of **home**; males did not. Females waxed lyrical about the beauty of the campus; males did not. Taken together, these various differences suggest variation along gender lines in what may be called **aesthetic sensibility** or what others have called **relational** (versus principled) **morality** (Gilligan, 1982). Irrespective of the language used, females tended to perceive the world in terms of a series of relationships, including their relationship to others, to themselves and to the physical world. Accordingly, they were sensitive to variations in people, in colors, in shapes, in light, and so on. Conversely, males, as a group, tended to be more focused on the tasks at hand and the abstract principles which underlay them. Consequently, they appeared content to deal with others (and have others deal with them) on a superficial basis. Concomitantly, they were relatively insensitive to decor, to HOME, and to the physical appearance of the campus in which they daily moved.

Discussion

The findings in this subdomain are relevant on two levels. The first level is practical. Fear of sexual assault constituted a source of continuous threat for a minority of female freshmen. This fear was usually not prominent; it operated in the background as a niggling doubt and an additional form of uncertainty. In these senses, it exacerbated transitional stress, and thus, in a minor way, slowed freshmen adjustment. In contrast, the beauty of the campus worked its magic in the other direction, providing an unexpected source of support, again only for a minority of female freshmen.

The fact that both processes were part of female consciousness speaks to the second level which is based on gender differences. These are **female** fears and **female** rewards. In broader terms, then, both represent additional sources of **variation** in the daily experience of freshman students.

Subdomain: UNIVERSITY SERVICES

Theme 35: Food. The fact that some students experienced some difficulty in maintaining a regular and nutritious diet has already been noted. Here, the accent is neither on quantity nor quality, but rather with taste, and thus, with **desirability**. Given that nearly every theme examined thus far has been characterized by some degree of variation, it will come as little surprise that subjects were split on the desirability of university food, with inspection indicating a slight bias against when judged in absolute terms and a strong bias against when judged against food available in public restaurants or at home.

First, the good news from subjects who liked the food most of the time.

At 7:00 [PM], [roommate] and I went for supper. The perogies at [campus location] are pretty good! [113F/D SE10]. [Boyfriend] backed his bike up outside of [residence], then we headed over to [campus location] for lunch. The food there is actually quite good. [113F/D SE11]. Ravioli here is pretty putrid! [113F/D SE19].

I ate dinner with [female 1]. The fish was actually quite good. Oh, no. I am getting used to the food. Is that good or bad? [134F/D SE12]. I ate at [campus location] by myself. The chicken parmesan was excellent. I bought two Halloween cookies, one of which I gave to [female]. [134F/D OC26].

Those who did not like the food were rather more outspoken, and even noted some food argot (eg., "dough balls") that had apparently evolved among subjects.

[Roommate] and I went in search of some place new to eat. We decided to give [campus location] a try; big mistake. I came back to my room, shut the door and placed the garbage can beside my bed in [case] of an emergency puke. I will never it at [that location] again and I wouldn't suggest that anyone else does either. [147F/D SE11].

[Roommate] was sleeping but I wanted to go, so 6 of us headed over to [campus location] for Chinese food. There were chicken balls that tasted more like Chicken McNuggets, soggy eggrolls, bland rice and greasy vegetables. Blech! [144F/D OC17].

I ate dinner in the lower level lounge of [residence], with [two females]. I had the Chinese special which included dough balls with chicken. Yes, the dough balls did have chicken in them, although it took you a few bites to find it. [134F/D OC25].

At first, [cafeteria] was great. Now, I'm so sick of eating [that food]. There's no variety in the food here. I guess we're supposed to have the best food in Ontario out of university food. That's what I heard because we have the most restaurants, the most variety, but you can only eat parmigiana anything, florentine anything and stuffed pork loin so long and you can get sick of it. That's all they serve. You just get sick of it. The food is very greasy here, there's no spices in it, and they always overcook the spaghetti and undercook the vegetables and I guess you just get fuzzy. [104F/I DE01].

While poor taste and lack of variety were the major complaints, subjects also noted several secondary issues.

[Campus location 1] is the cheapest place to eat and you don't have to pay a fortune for food like you do at [campus location 2]. [104F/D SE16]

I went to take [my mother] grocery shopping with me - I need food and I need her as my good influence towards fruit and vegetables. (Why can't I find good fruit on campus?) [113F.D NV06].

Mum called tonight. I want to spend Monday of Thanksgiving in the kitchen, making lasagne and cookies. Never realized how much I loved cooking 'til I couldn't do it anymore. [113F/D SE28].

I ate nothing for breakfast except a granola bar. There is no place on campus open [on Sunday] for eating before 10:00 [AM]. [134F/D OC15].

Feeling sick of cafeteria meatloaf. Want to make my own. [112F/D SE14]. Went to dinner. Felt good to eat somewhere where you don't have to stand in line with a tray. [112F/D OC21].

As for the comparison between campus cafeteria food and food from a restaurant or from home, subjects were again outspoken.

Then they took me out for a steak dinner. Real food. It was good. [104F/D SE25].

We went to [Restaurant] and then had a meal that was worth paying for, unlike cafeteria food. [105F/D SE30].

I can't wait to see my Mom and Dad (and [brother], not as desperately though) and to have a home cooked meal with real vegies and meat. No more salad and sandwiches! [154F/D SE25].

[Roommate], [female] and I go to [Restaurant] for dinner. A nice change from cafeteria food! [123F/D NV03].

I forgot to say that this weekend I got all home cooked meals and it was just great. The cafeteria food is really getting to me and I'm thankful that my Mom is such a good cook. I even took leftovers back to school for tomorrow's lunch. [133F/D OC16].

It is difficult to assess the salience of these remarks. Eating the same food, day after day, no matter what quality or taste, is likely to pall eventually. Further, providing sufficient variety to satisfy the tastes of over 3,000 freshman students over an entire semester is likely impossible. Rather, the salience of subject comments appeared to reflect, first, earlier comments about the importance for females of HOME, that is, food that appealed to their aesthetic sensibility and which reminded them of the security and the familiarity of home. It could also reflect another basis of gender variation, since males tended to complain about getting enough food whereas females complained about its taste and preparation.

Theme 36: Service Staff. University service staff represent a final set of actors⁴³ with whom subjects came into almost daily contact, including clerical, food service, bookstore and counselling personnel. As expected, subject contact yielded mixed results, with some complementary and others condemnatory.

As for the former, subjects were appreciative of even the smallest kindness, although note that this required that subjects be willing to receive them, a fact not always in evidence.

Got up at 8:00 AM this morning for registration. Line-up went all around the building. I was told before I came that Guelph was a university of line-ups. So far, it's true... There are a lot of people wandering around, waiting to give information, but I didn't want to look like a stupid frosh. There is no reason to be lost or confused in this school, because so many people are willing to help you. [119F/D SE66].

⁴³ In fact, there are a range of additional actors who appear not at all in student diaries or interviews, including, for example, maintenance and cleaning personnel, grounds personnel and administrative personnel. The reason for their invisibility is not hard to come by: they are staff members with whom freshman students seldom, if ever, come into direct contact.

[Two males] and I went to dinner and we're all getting kind of sick with cafeteria food. I have to admit that the lady at the cash is kind of nice and always has a smile on her face to brighten one's day. [133F/D SE15].

I found the people working in the tech[nical] book section of the store to be very pleasant. That's somewhat surprising considering how busy they are. [147F/D SE10].

We finally went for breakfast around 11:30 [AM]. There's an older lady who's a cashier at [residence]. She's been there quite a lot since I got here, and I like her. She seems genuinely interested in the people she's serving. She's kind of mothering, too; always calls you "dear". [113F/D SE10].

As for those with complaints, they were uniformly outspoken. However, note that service personnel were not the only ones who could be rude; students were guilty of such behavior as well.

I feel sorry for the people working in the cafeteria. Very often I observe the students to be quite rude to the staff. That's not fair. They only work there after all, and are just following [the] rules. [133F/D SE21].

OSAP's a joke. [Female] was really good...but those secretaries up there need a smile pill or something. They really do. I think money is one of the worst things. It makes people really irritable and I understand, but I think they should be trained to deal with students that are in a dilemma. They are the snottiest people towards you. I have no clue what's going on and they figure you do and you say, "Look, I got this [form] and I don't understand it." and it's, like, "Come back tomorrow." They don't understand how much anxiety this is if the thing's not in. That means, "Oh, gee, I might not come back to school next year." [104F/I DE01].

But when I got here, the only people I've ever had trouble with are the cafeteria people. They are the most. It's indescribable. You know the little meal cards you get. Well, if you've got a tray full of food and you've got a knapsack or something on one shoulder, it's a little difficult, if somebody's in front of you, you can't put your tray down and hand them your card. They just stand there. They don't say anything, just stand there. And it's really frustrating. I [used to work] at this restaurant. That's just one thing you don't do. [161F/I SE15].

I went to write module 2 for [course]. I passed it this time, so I was happy about that. The woman who gives out the quizzes is really kind of nasty. She just throws the quizzes at you. There was a girl in there today who had forgotten her calculator but she only realized it after she had sat down to begin the quiz. She asked the woman at the desk if she had any extra calculators but there weren't any. The girl was kind of frantic and she said, "What am I going to do?" The woman at the desk just said, "I don't know, count on your fingers." I thought that was a mean thing to say. [147F/D SE27].

You know, I was told today there are many suicide attempts in this university. Well, you know personally I would never do that, but look at how hard it is to get help. I phoned last week when I was near hysterics to talk to a counsellor and I had to make an appointment for Wednesday this week. [105F/D NV03].

Not to mention today (after waiting 2 hours to talk to Prof. [...] yesterday), I waited for 1 hour to talk with Prof. [...], then went over to records where he instructed me to go for

them to fill out a withdrawal sheet. Then, he wouldn't sign it. Well, they told me otherwise. So I had to go over to get [prof] to sign it and the lady at the desk didn't tell me to get a residence signature, therefore I had to go after waiting 45 minutes in line over to [residence] where the residence bureau or whatever they're called were to be found got a signature. Then went over and got it signed from the lady at records, but she said I didn't have to wait in line again. Finally, I'm withdrawn [from the university]. If I had of had any doubts [about withdrawing], that [experience] surely would have made me make my decision but quick. [105F/D NV03].⁴⁴

Some of these negative remarks can be attributed to a problem endemic to all large or medium sized universities at the beginning of the semester: too many students and too few service staff. The results are frayed tempers on both sides, making conflict inevitable. When such practices persist, however, as subjects' comments suggest they may have done, then they are not so easy to condone and suggest a problem of poor customer relations. While easy to explain, this is often difficult to correct. After all, students are, by definition, temporary while staff are relatively permanent. Consequently, it is easy for service staff to come to see students and their incessant demands as the primary obstacle to getting their job done, forgetting of course that satisfying student demands is their job.

Discussion

In general terms, the findings in this subdomain speak to the issue of **organizational climate** and its relationship to freshman student adjustment and transition. In this regard, Noel et al. (1985) argues persuasively that the key to student persistence is **people**, that is, staff who care about students and are prepared to bend over backwards to assist and support them. Student comments suggest that this view is not limited to persistence, but has broad application to student adjustment. Staff who followed Noel et al.'s advice created an organizational climate which, in a limited way, acted to mitigate difference, culture shock and other various sources of transitional stress. Those who disregarded that advice only contributed to transitional stress which, for some students, such as subject #105, could mean attrition.

⁴⁴ A related problem to the bureaucratic paper chase involves the lack of congruence between office hours and students hours, as the following subject explains: I: Have you been over to talk to Career Services at all? I don't have time! They're not open at 2 AM or Sunday evening at 7. These are the times that I have free and nothing's ever open. [162F/I DE05].

The relationship between climate and stress, however, is unlikely to be a direct one. Rather, it is likely to vary as a function of a series of intervening processes, one of which involves gender. In general, female freshmen appeared rather more sensitive than their male counterparts to poor tasting food and rude or uncaring service staff. Conversely, female freshmen were not difficult to please, for their very sensitivity meant that they were more likely to spot and appreciate even small efforts at kindness and cordiality.

METATHEMATIC ANALYSIS

Qualitative analysis of student daily diaries and periodic interviews has yielded a complex array of 35 themes, summarized below (see Figure 1).

Thematic analysis must, of necessity, stay quite close to the empirical data from which it derives. Consequently, it is primarily descriptive, and involves only a series of domain specific lower-order inferences. In contrast, metathematic analysis necessarily involves a series of higher-order inferences which transcend thematic domains and subdomains. While both thematic and metathematic analysis share a concern with the discovery of repetitive sequences or **patterns**, only the latter involves an inferential leap that is both analytical and intuitive. On this basis, close inspection of the 35 themes described above yields **ten** metathemes: (1) **Getting Connected 1: New Friends**; (2) **Getting Connected 2: Secondary Others**; (3) **Staying Connected: Family, Friends and Lovers**; (4) **Transitional Stress: Coping and Adjustment**; (5) **Academic Transition**; (6) **Self-Esteem and Identity**; (7) **Gender Differences**; (8) **Sources of Variation**; (9) **Place and** (10) **Cross-Linkage**.

Domain 1: PERSONAL

Subdomain: PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Theme 1: Culture Shock.
- Theme 2: Psychophysiological State.
- Theme 3: Adjustment.
- Theme 4: Self-Esteem.
- Discussion

Subdomain: ACADEMIC

- Theme 5: Transition.
- Theme 6: Grades.
- Theme 8: Semester System.
- Theme 9: Academic Success.
- Theme 10: Hidden Curriculum.
- Theme 11: Classroom Size.
- Theme 12: Classroom Dynamics: I. Peer Relations.
- Theme 13: Classroom Dynamics: II. Student-Faculty Relations.
- Discussion

Domain 2: INTERPERSONAL

Subdomain: FRIENDS

- Theme 14: Salience of Friends.
- Theme 15: Old Friends.
- Theme 16: New Friends.
- Theme 17: Peer Pressure.
- Theme 18: Support versus Demand.
- Theme 19: Temporal Course of Friendship.
- Discussion

Subdomain: ROMANTIC PARTNERS

- Theme 20: Salience of a Romantic Partner.
- Theme 21: Commitment versus Opportunity.
- Theme 22: Relationship Maintenance.
- Discussion

Subdomain: FAMILY MEMBERS

- Theme 23: Salience of Family Relationships.
- Theme 24: Status Aspiration.
- Theme 25: Stability and Change.
- Theme 26: Cross-Linkage.
- Discussion

Figure 1 (Cont'd)

Domain 3: ENVIRONMENTAL

Subdomain: RESIDENCE LIFE

Theme 27: Residential Locus.

Theme 28: Activity 1: Orientation.

Theme 29: Activity 2: Party Time.

Theme 30: Control Over Private Space 1: Social Contact.

Theme 31: Control Over Private Space 2: Home.

Theme 32: Residence Assistants.

Discussion

Subdomain: UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

Theme 33: Security Fears.

Theme 34: Beautiful Campus.

Discussion

Subdomain: UNIVERSITY SERVICES

Theme 35: Food.

Theme 36: Service Staff.

Discussion

Figure 1

Thematic analysis of freshmen daily diaries
and periodic interviews.

1. Getting Connected 1: New Friends

The singular imperative of freshman students on arrival at university was with **getting connected**. This refers to the process of establishing a network of friends who, with parents and lovers, were seen as the most significant of significant others on campus. While the need for connections was, as we have seen, typically expressed by students in affectively charged terms, in practice they tended to underestimate the real extent to which such others represented a survival prerequisite in what was, for them, a new and threatening environment. Effectively, friends served a host of related functions, including information, guidance, support, recognition, reinforcement, assistance, shared experience, permission (to try new perspectives, to change, to grow), tension release, meaning (its evolution and elaboration), and pleasure. In this sense, getting connected to new friends was not merely an expression of sentimentality; it was a

process integral to the university experience. Indeed, this insight is at the heart of Astin's (1984) **involvement theory**, such that getting connected is, in part, synonymous with 'adjustment' while its opposite, **staying separated**, appears related either to delayed adjustment, maladjustment and/or risk of attrition.

This said, 'friends' were not all of equal importance. Rather, to use a metaphor, they were arrayed much like the traditional image of the structure of the atom, with its nucleus surround by concentric bands or 'shells' of circling electrons.⁴⁵ Among freshman students, their 'nucleus' was represented by 2-4 significant others, typically including their one or two "best" same-sex friends, their boyfriend or girlfriend and a parent, often their mother. Next, the first 'shell' was represented by a small number of friends with whom they were somewhat close and intimate, but not quite on a par with their "best" friend(s). The second 'shell' involved a widely varying number of acquaintances with whom little self-disclosure occurred but with whom shared activity, including 'talk' of shared academic experience, was enjoyable. Finally, the third 'shell' consisted of 'faces', people subjects' encountered in the hall or in the classroom, whose face they recognized but with whom contact remained fleeting and evanescent.

On campus, it was to these new friends that students went for support and succor, and it was with them that they spent the bulk of their out-of-class time (when not alone, studying or doing other things). In practice, it was these relationships that, in large measure, **define** the university experience for freshmen, for good or ill, academic matters notwithstanding.

Further, these relationships were neither created nor maintained without sustained effort, for friends simultaneously represented sources of support and demand. The effort required to accept the support and meet the demand could be both satisfying and exhausting.

A case in point concerned the relationship with roommates who, because of simple proximity, had special status as new friends. However, the likelihood that student-roommate relationship would evolve into "best" friends was low for various reasons. Differences in personality, characteristic patterns of relating (ie., close versus distant), habits of living (eg., neat versus messy), and the like, had all to be confronted and

⁴⁵ In the face of accumulating research data, this image has become obsolete and is no longer in use among physics, chemists and others.

overcome. Pre-existing relationship commitments (eg., coalition formation), the involvement of outside others (eg., lovers), and the prevailing level of academic demand also created complications. Even the level of floormate intrusiveness and residence noise could facilitate or impede relations among roommates. Finally, given a range of competing demands, the 13-week semester may simply have provided insufficient time for roommates to develop success accommodations across all of the dimensions noted above; certainly, the likelihood of either partner developing a sense of **home** with regard to the other was remote. Consequently, the temporal course of roommate relationships was far more likely to involve intimate acquaintances or pseudointimate friends than best friends.

Thus, getting connected to new friends was more likely characterized by diversity and variation than by homogeneity and stability. Specific relationships not only displayed daily ups and downs, but gradually changed through time, more often in the direction of greater distance than greater closeness. Similarly, the character of their 'shell' networks varied tremendously across subjects, with some small and stable, others large and in flux. Such diversity notwithstanding, all such networks had one thing in common: for those whose networks they were, they were uniformly perceived as **salient** to the daily lived experience of entering freshmen.

2. Getting Connected 2: Secondary Others

Friends were not the only others present on campus with whom subjects regularly interacted. Rather, there were a range of others who, in terms of salience, meaning and frequency of contact, were decidedly secondary. These included professors, resident assistants, teaching assistants as well as all and sundry service staff.

Of these, professors had a special place in relation to freshmen. There were several reasons for this. By virtue of their control over course grades, professors literally had the power to determine whether the students in their charge remained at the university or were forced to leave it. The result was a status gap that, for most subjects, was perceived as virtually unbridgeable. Further, unlike friends, professors seldom interacted regularly with any given student on a one-to-one basis; rather, typical encounters took place in

the formal context of the classroom. The result was that the man or women subjects saw before them was typically a social construction, born only minimally out of actual interaction, and thus at some distant from the real person. Finally, relations between professors and students arose out of a complicated mix of the personal and the impersonal. Professors presumably evaluated students in terms of their academic skills and abilities. Students evaluated professors as to their position on a continuum of 'goodness-badness', with the latter a complex process (rather than a simple outcome) that arose out of student individual differences, classroom culture, the hidden curriculum, and the larger context of variations in course schedules. The upshot of either evaluation effort was to create distance between participants, for friendship at minimum requires that each see the other in personal terms and on a regular basis. Consequently, quite apart from the course material they taught and the course grades they delivered, professors **as persons** play only a minor role in the daily experience of freshman students.

For related reasons, the same was true for the other actors noted above. RAs, for example, moved through the students' environment largely unseen and certainly unappreciated. Ironically, this was most likely the case when RAs were at their best. At their worst, RA behavior could be problematic to varying degrees for specific individuals while ignored by others on the floor. Similarly, TAs were often perceived as appendages to professors rather than as separate individuals in their own right. Even so, their impact on freshmen could occasionally be significant as a function of their greater accessibility compared with professors, both in terms of time as well as in terms of relative status. Finally, service staff, including clerks, cashiers, and the like, were analogous to 'faces' among students' peer network: they were recognized, familiar and regularly encountered, but were salient only as part of the background of university life. Apart from that background, they had no independent existence, such that problematic encounters with them could simply be dismissed as reflecting the larger workings of an essentially impersonal 'system'. Similarly, pleasing encounters with them contributed to an overall impression of the campus as 'friendly' and 'warm'.

Such minor individual impacts notwithstanding, the collective importance of secondary others should not be underestimated. The behavior of professors, TAs, RAs and service staff and others were part of subjects' daily experience and, as such, they helped define what sort of place the university was for them and

how well or poorly they were able to meet it explicit and implicit demands. Further, while they clearly did not overshadow the influence of significant others, such as friends or parents, secondary others could, through contrast, alter how these others were perceived and appreciated.

3. Staying Connected: Family, Friends and Romantic Others

New friends and family, (old) friends and romantic others had much in common. Both groups, for example, were comprised of others significant to study subjects. Further, both groups were more-or-less in daily contact with them, both provided essential support yet also constituted sources of demand, and both were consequential in terms of the daily lived experience of subjects.

There were several respects, however, in which family, old old friends and romantic others were uniquely different, and old new friends somewhat so. First, these relationships were characterized by a level of **emotional intensity** unmatched by that found in relations with new friends. Consequently, subjects were more likely to turn to these others than to their new friends in coping with certain problems encountered on campus (eg., academic failure, romantic opportunities, problems with new friends, etc).

Second, these relationships pre-dated subjects' arrival on campus, and thus had both a **past and a future** as well as a **quality of intimacy** unlike relations with new friends. Such intimacy meant that these others were really the only ones with whom students could interact in order to achieve a sense of **home**, and thus feel at ease to be themselves.

Third, as a function of longstanding mutual involvement, relations with these others were necessarily organized or **patterned** in particular ways. In turn, these patterns, especially as regards those involving family members, made for an order of influence quite unmatched by current new friends. Indeed, with regard to family members, it was entirely reasonable to expect them to have had a shaping influence of fundamental significance in the lives of subjects encompassing such things as personality, self-esteem, social competence, style of social relating, and so on. In other words, such pre-entry relations help account for the **degree of preparedness** of entering freshman.

In turn, this calls attention to **three** related issues, namely, family type, personal identity, and roommate relations. As regards family type, subjects varied widely across a range of variables which we may collectively refer to as 'social competence'. For example, subjects who were loosely tied to family members through bonds of respect and affection were likely to have little difficulty making friends and were likely to experience homesickness as only a transitory problem. Subjects who were tightly bound to family members through bonds of mutual involvement and dependence were likely to have significant difficulties in both areas. As regards, personal identity, variation in family type also helps to explain variation in social self-esteem. For example, subjects in family relationships characterized by conflict and ambivalence arrived at the university with low social self-esteem. Finally, as regards roommate compatibility, this too appeared to vary as a function of the congruence between partners in terms of family type. When both partners, for example, derived from tightly bound or enmeshed families, each was likely to view the other's close style of relating as familiar and comfortable. When both came from divergent types - say, one from an enmeshed family, the other from a separated family - then the "normal" efforts at close bonding by one was likely to be experienced by the other as suffocating and insensitive.

Fourth, also as a function of their prevailing patterns of relating, subjects were likely more **influential** in the lives of these others compared to their influence on new friends. The difference between the two groups was that while subjects were integral to the prevailing patterns of relating with these others, they were only recently part of the patterns which characterized their relations with new friends. Consequently, only among these others was subjects' **absence** likely to induce a significant change, especially among family members. In turn, this highlights the reciprocal character of these relationships, for just as family members affected subjects, so subjects, even at a distance - perhaps, in part, because of it - affected their family members.

Fifth, relations between subjects and these others - especially between them and old old friends and/or romantic others - were more likely to be **at risk** than relations with new friends. The major difference here had to do with distance and what this did to the sharing of context markers.

It will be recalled that the latter refer to the sharing by both partners in a relationship of the many minor events and experiences which make up their individual lives. In turn, such sharing enables the partners to construct a shared meaning system which corresponds to the feeling of **home**, that is, in which each partner feels completely and thoroughly known and understood by the other, and thus feels free to relax and be genuinely themselves in the presence of the other.

As regards roommates, these context markers were shared automatically, as a function of simple proximity and frequency of contact. By contrast, relations with old old friends and romantic others, since both were 'back home', were characterized by neither proximity nor frequent contact. Rather, both relationships had to compete for time and energy against all other on-going relationships on campus as well as against prevailing academic demand. Consequently, there was a very real risk that these other relationships would increasingly deteriorate, perhaps even terminate, as more and more context markers 'fell' out of their shared meaning system.

Taken together, these considerations suggest **twin** conclusions. On the one hand, the mere fact of geographic distance was simply irrelevant in terms of the on-going involvement of family members, old friends and romantic others in subjects' daily life. Whether students loved them or hated them, the simple fact was that they were continuously involved with them, and thought about them frequently. On the other hand, those who would argue that, on theoretical grounds, these others may be ignored as sources of freshman influence (eg., Tinto, 1987) appear, in the light of these data, to be mistaken.

4. Transitional Stress: Coping and Adjustment

Movement from high school to university involved massive dislocation in subjects' daily lives. This was so in at least three generic senses. First, it meant a major change in daily routine, including sleeping, eating, residence, event scheduling, and so forth. Second, it signaled significant shifts in academic life, including workload, classroom attendance, student-professor relations, classroom size, semester system, and so forth. Finally, it involved major alteration in social relations, including meeting a range of new peers and,

associated with them, a range of new assumptions, expectations, preferences and norms or rules; change could also be anticipated in relations with existing peers and family members.

The combined result of these various changes was that of significant transitional stress. For a minority of subjects, this involved "eustress" (Selye, 1974), that is, **enjoyable challenge**, and was be associated with a range of positive feelings, including excitement, enthusiasm, enjoyment, even euphoria. For a second minor group of subjects, this involved "distress" (Selye, 1974), that is, **overwhelming demand**, and was associated with a range of negative feelings, including fear, anxiety, uncertainty, even dread. For the majority of subjects, neither eustress nor distress predominated; rather, some combination of both were typical. Thus, subjects distributed along a continuum of transitional stress.

Among those temporarily paralyzed by distress, intense 'culture shock', homesickness, sleep disruption, dietary changes, weight loss, flu-like illness(es) and other psychological and psychophysical changes were commonplace. Moreover, this range of stress-related symptoms was slow to dissipate. Related signs of stress involved manifest difficulty in coping with the prevailing level of academic demand, with a real possibility for adverse consequences for mid-term and semester grades. Similarly, social demand also proved problematic, with the slow development of a network of new peers a major source of distress. Conflict with parents 'back home', and possible dissolution of relations with old old friends also contributed to stress. In such cases, adjustment to university life was be delayed, often requiring the entire first semester and even longer. A minority of such subjects either never adjusted or found the adjustment process too painful to endure, and consequently were at high risk of attrition.

Among those whose predominant response was one of eustress, psychological and psychophysiological symptoms were few in number and fleeting in duration. Academic demand was experienced as "high" but manageable; there was a reasonable chance that entering grades were maintained or fell only one grade point. The development of peer relations proceeded smoothly and was a major source of pleasure, although a longing for **home** was still evident among female subjects. Some change in relations with old old friends could occur, but concentrated effort ensured that "best" friends were likely retained. Similarly, relations with parents continued on a cordial basis and could even involve increased closeness and understanding; increased

respect for student independence was likely. The overall result was relatively rapid adjustment university life.

Either extreme accounted for about 20% of all subjects. The remaining 60% fell somewhere in the middle, encountering some difficulty, coping with significant transitional stress, but eventually adjusting to it. Such adjustment was characterized by the re-establishment of a stable and sustainable equilibrium, but one marked by at least some novel patterns of interpersonal interaction.

From this perspective, relations between students and significant others were not 'merely' part of the process of adjustment. Rather, they *were* that process, with university life constituted in large measure out of subjects' dealings with those people who made up their social world. These others, these 'ghosts', cannot simply be bracketed out of existence by theoretical fiat, for doing so fundamentally distorts the daily lived experience of student subjects.

On similar grounds, significant others cannot be consigned to the substantively empty void of "the environment". Such figure-ground slight of hand fails to recognize the context-specific manner in which subjects' adjustment was mediated by on-going relations with specific others with whom they interacted daily. Taken seriously, these insights suggest that adjustment be viewed as a **social process** with psychological overtone, **not**, as in the literature, a psychological state with social consequences.

Thus, student adjustment appeared intimately related to the temporal course of relations with significant others. Disruption of and/or serious conflict within these relationships typically resulted in a slowing of adjustment. Similarly, reaffirmation of the stability of these relationships often accelerates that process.

In turn, this implies that subjects' cognitive and affective processes were seldom entirely **personal**; rather, the relationship between psychological and interpersonal processes appears reciprocal. Thus, what was technically "outside" was represented "inside" in the form of socially constructed patterns of thought, feeling and behavior. Similarly, what was "inside" routinely got "out" as students interacted with, and thus influenced, the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of those who made up their "shell" network.

Given that subjects and their networks were irretrievably tied together, each interdependent upon the other, the process of adjustment can be fruitfully conceptualized as an on-going phenomenon **over the**

long term. It follows that it is only within this long range trajectory of **change and development** that freshman transition appears as a particular phase of adjustment.

In this sense, optimum adjustment **during the freshman phase** essentially involves achieving a workable **balance** between what are, in practice, opposing dimensional pairs, such as home versus university, academic versus social, past versus future, and personal versus interpersonal.

Those unable to do so or who were significantly delayed in doing so were consequently 'at risk', either for maladjustment and/or attrition. Further, such considerations suggest a social definition of **risk** among entering freshmen. This would attend, first, to the character of relations with several key others, and, second, their psychological and psychophysiological concomitants, as the critical indices of adjustment. As to the identification of "key" others, these would include parents, "best" old old friends, romantic others, roommates, and at least one other new friend. Indicators of 'risk' would include: symptoms of transition slow to fade; significant increases in prevailing levels of parent-student conflict; deterioration or disruption of relations with "best" old old friends; instability and/or increased conflict in relations with romantic others; sustained conflict and/or hostility in relations with roommates; social isolation (ie., the **absence** of new friends); the experience of academic demand as overwhelming; and, the **absence** of perceived social support. No one indicator alone would be taken as conclusive; rather, attention would focus on their configuration, especially their cumulation.

This formulation diverges from traditional approaches on **three** grounds: it focuses on relationships, not individuals; it assumes that psychological and psychophysiological states are symptoms of relational processes, not the other way around; and, it assumes that academic difficulties reflect, at least in part, on-going relational processes, and are seldom solely a function of individual attributes, such as poor academic preparation.

As of this writing, this risk measure has at least some evidentiary support. Of the seven subjects rated 'at risk' on the grounds listed above, four (57%) gave explicit evidence of distress by the end of semester 1: one dropped out and three sought personal counselling.

5. Academic Transition

In terms of academic work, the shift from high school to university was characterized most by difference. In high school, students are accustomed to relatively small classes where they are known personally by their teachers. In university, they attended large classes in which the relationship between professors and students was largely one of anonymity. In high school, students behavior is minutely scrutinized and highly controlled; homework are checked, and permission is routinely required to leave the class while it is in session. In university, neither restriction applied; students were free to attend to their 'homework' assignments as they saw fit and could come and go in class as they pleased. In high school, courses and gradable assignment or examinations are distributed throughout a 10-month academic year. In university - at least at the University of Guelph - courses and grades were distributed by means of two 13-week semesters. Finally, in high school, the workload is relatively moderate and, for most, quite manageable, with considerable time remaining for socializing. In university, the workload was relatively high, for most quite difficult and with comparatively less free time available for socializing.

These differences - the above list is quite incomplete - meant that, for the bulk of subjects, university was experienced as involving very high academic demand. To make matters worse, such demand was comprised of both static and dynamic elements, with the latter creating uncertainty and instability, and thus increasing stress. Static elements, including the semester system, class size, and explicit course content, were macrostructural in character, that is, they were a fixed and predictable part of the existing academic system. In contrast, dynamic elements, such as the hidden curriculum, classroom culture and professor-student relations, were microstructural in nature, that is, they arose out of face-to-face interaction, with highly variable results. Moreover, each of these two sets of elements required different skill complements, the former standard academic skills, the latter variable interpersonal skills. Variation across subjects in the acquisition and development of these divergent skills made their entering grades an unreliable predictor of university academic performance; not only did the majority (65%) of subjects experience a decline in grades, but first semester grades were a much better predictor of second semester grades than entering high school grades. These results are consistent with the value-added formulation presented above. Indeed, the latter finding

suggests the possibility that once a grade average has been established at the end of semester 1, it may subsequently be very difficult for most students to alter that average; the combination of macro and micro processes may lock-in the semester 1 grade average.

6. Self-Esteem and Identity

Conventional views of student self-esteem and identity tend to conceptualize both as individual attributes. Certainly student subjects shared this perspective, repeatedly interpreting shifts in their self-esteem as reflective of a relatively stable self image or 'personality'.

Subject comments, however, supported an alternate formulation which holds that both self-esteem and identity are in practice **social constructions**, that is, both arise and are either sustained or change as a function of on-going interaction with significant others. This dispenses with the traditional distinction between self and other, and is concerned not only with **what** is 'inside' but rather with the **process** by which what is 'outside' gets 'inside' (see above).

Evidence in support of this formulation was scattered but consistent. Self-esteem varied as a function of family type, with those from affectionate independent families more likely to enter university with high social self-esteem than those from hostile independent families. Enjoyment of academic and social successes was tied to the reactions of parents and peers. A coherent sense of self was tied to the temporal course of relations with romantic others. Dependence on the views of others made it extremely difficult for subjects to set limits on floormate social intrusion. Shifts in relations with parents and old old friends were experienced as disorienting and as disruptive of their sense of self. Peer pressure among males resulted in compliance with deviant rules of acceptable conduct, thus defining, by contrast, how such students thought about themselves. Evaluation by others, including professors, yielded a particular view of their academic selves. Finally, subjects' behavior influenced the behavior of significant others, such as family members, who, in turn, influences subjects' behavior, in an iterative cycle.

Thus, how subjects saw themselves, both generally (in terms of their stable identity) and specifically

significant others. This is to suggest that iterative relations between self and others is not merely one among a host of factors influencing student identity and self-esteem; rather, while not the only relevant factor, such relations appear prepotent, playing a critical role in shaping how subjects came to see themselves over the course of the first semester.

Seen in light of previous comments concerning the importance of getting and staying connected, this formulation has important implications for freshman student experience. For example, it predicts that self-esteem and identity are likely to vary as a function of shifts in relations with parents, roommates and romantic others. Those from affectionate independent families, those with 'best friend' roommate relations and those with stable relations with a romantic other will likely enter and sustain a high sense of social and intellectual self-esteem as well as a positive sense of self. It is unclear whether such a view of self will translate directly into academic performance. It is clear that it will be associated with manageable transitional stress, low and episodic homesickness and high satisfaction.

7. Gender Differences

There are various aspects of subjects' daily experience that were viewed in much the same way by men and women. For example, the likelihood of a reduced grade, the experience of the workload as high, the impact of culture shock, and so on, did not appear to vary by gender.

This said, a host of variables did show marked variation by gender, most of them in the interpersonal domain. For example, as a group, women preferred to interact one-on-one or in small groups, with their preferred activity that of 'talk'. Their quality of 'talk' was characterized by self-disclosure and thus encouraged the development of intimacy. Friendship relations were typically non-competitive and highly supportive, both emotionally and in practical terms. Their emphasis on 'talk' also meant that most were quite abstemious with regard to the use of alcohol or drugs; episodes of drunkenness were unlikely to be marked by antisocial behavior. While subjected to peer influence, this was easily resisted. Finally, women displayed an aesthetic sensibility which translated, on the one hand, into an acute sensitivity to the social and physical

environment around them and, on the other hand, into decision-making which automatically took their relationship with others into account.

In contrast, men, as a group, preferred to interact in groups, with some sort of physical activity the focus of concern. 'Talk' in such groups aided the development of cordiality; intimacy was not an objective of interaction such that self-disclosure was often avoided. Relations with same-sex others was marked by 'pseudointimacy' which, once achieved, remained quite stable. Such relations were also marked by tension and ambivalence which arose out of subtle competitiveness, with mutual support more likely to be practical than affective. Among a minority, use of alcohol and/or drugs to excess was commonplace, and was frequently associated with antisocial behavior. Among a majority, the behavior of the minority was generally tolerated and frequently rationalized or even normalized as either "good clean fun" or "a temporary phase" they were going through. Males subjected to peer pressure were induced to comply with deviant standards of conduct which they found hard to resist, hence the elaborate accompanying rationalizations. Finally, men tended to be quite instrumental and task oriented. Consequently, they were largely unaware of any variation in their environment.

What is especially noteworthy about this partial list of gender-based differences is that they cut across a range of dimensions, dimensions which, collectively, account for much of subjects' daily experience. Consequently, such differences tend to qualify much of what has already been said, above.

8. Sources of Variation

Given the size of the freshman population - nearly one third of the total student population of the University of Guelph - there is a natural tendency to characterize freshmen by selective reference to a handful of central tendencies among the total population (eg., average age, gender distribution, average parental income, etc.). Once in place, such characterizations tend to get carried over into the worlds of research and programming. Indeed, given this perspective, it is a simple matter to slide noiselessly from speaking about 'freshmen' (plural) to speaking about 'the freshman student' (singular).

The findings of this study argue strenuously against such practices, however 'natural' they may be. Indeed, study subjects, despite their small *n*, were characterized **not** by their homogeneity, but rather by their extraordinary variety. In typological terms, for example, it was possible to reliably distinguish between four family types, three roommate categories, three romantic others groups, and three sets of friends! Gender differences constituted another major source of variation, while significant variation was also apparent across the 19 rated variables as well as the standard scores on the FACES, SCL and SDTI-2. Thus, heterogeneity was the order of the day.

Seen through this lens, efforts to narrow attention to selective central tendencies can correctly be seen as the imposition of a simple conceptualization on a complex phenomenon. The inevitable minimum results are slippage and distortion.

9. Place

Each university campus represents a specific place, having unique characteristics which, collectively, cannot **not** indirectly influence the daily lives of freshmen. Similarly, each residence room constitutes a specific place on campus having specific design features which alternately facilitate and restrict what students choose to do there.

Among female subjects alone, this dual sense of 'place' was quite apparent. On the one hand, they extolled the beauty of the campus, and many used that beauty as a means of relaxation and tension release. Walking for pleasure, reading in the sunshine or just sitting on the grass or looking at the stars were all common features of the daily activities of some women freshmen. On the other hand, their need to transform their room into a HOME was almost visceral. Without it, they were unable to "claim their territory", to "put down roots", and so feel comfortable and able to devote themselves wholeheartedly to work.

The relationship between these senses of 'place' and actual academic performance is unclear. What is clear is that 'place' contributed indirectly to comfort and satisfaction among subject women.

10. Cross-Linkage

Finally, the accounts of the subjects' daily experience were divided into three domains concerned, respectively, with personal, interpersonal and environmental matters. Given the complexity of the findings, it is now clear that that was essential for analytic clarity. Nevertheless, it violates the ecological integrity of the data insofar as it obscures the cross-linkages both between domains as well as across subdomains within a given domain.

Evidence of such cross-linkages was, in fact, pervasive. For example, relations with parents impacted on student self-esteem, while relations with romantic others interfered with academic performance. Conversely, student identity and family type shaped efforts at the evolution of a peer network. That network, in turn, helped account for student adjustment to residence life, including their reaction to orientation and party time, and so on.

Thus, what is striking about subjects accounts of their daily experience is that instances of experience which truly stand alone are rare; rather, the vast majority are reciprocally related to one, two or even several additional factors located in other domains or subdomains. In the language of systems theory (see Benjamin, 1982), such reciprocal relations within and across levels of experience is known as "nested looping", that is, an interlinked series of feedback loops.

We have already seen such a looping process in operation in the personal domain in which the linkages between fatigue, illness, weight loss and dietary difficulty were examined. Similarly, looping was again evident with respect to the 'goodness-badness' continuum along which professors were distributed. What both have in common is that they represent "vicious circles" in which the harder subjects tried to achieve a given goal, the more they failed in that attempt, while the context in which they operated made it difficult for them to slow down or, better still, step outside the system and simply stop. Thus, the harder subjects tried to preserve their time and energy in order to relax, the more likely they were to end up in a state of chronic fatigue. Similarly, the more professors tried to create a positive impression, the less they were likely to succeed, and the more subjects' negative evaluations stabilized. Indeed, it requires but a tiny inferential leap to see that both loops were connected, for chronic fatigue was likely to contribute negative-

ly to student evaluation of their professors. Further, as the number of iterations of these loops increased, the more likely they were to acquire homeostatic properties, that is, a tendency to remain stable despite efforts to the contrary, thus becoming increasingly difficult to change.

While complex, such formulations are critical to the construction of an ecologically valid account of the daily lived experience of entering freshmen.

SUMMARY⁴⁶

This account of the daily lived experienced of entering freshmen has been long and complex. Before turning to the implications of these findings, a brief summary seems in order.

Each year in North America, of those youngsters who graduate from high school, a minority - some two to three million strong - will decide to continue their education, entering college or university as freshmen. The decision will be a fateful one, with important consequences for themselves, those connected with them, and for the institutions to which they gain admittance. In turn, this suggests that the **freshman experience** should have received extensive research attention and thus be well understood. While research is indeed extensive, our understanding remains incomplete and unsystematic. Existing data are voluminous but typically at some considerable distance from the **lived experience** of the freshmen in question. There are also numerous gaps in the literature, and what does exist is usually unidimensional in character; an ecological sense of freshmen as **whole persons** is missing.

In an effort to compensate for some of these deficiencies, the **Student Experience Study** was initiated at the University of Guelph (Ontario, Canada) during the period September-December, 1988. Subjects consisted of 37 freshmen who attended START, the summer orientation program. Of these, 24 - 20 women and four men - completed all study components, namely, (1) six unstructured interviews held at two week intervals with a student service staff member acting as their "buddy"; (2) four standardized instruments

⁴⁶ In slightly modified form, this summary appeared in ACPA Developments (1989, 15 (1), 6) under the title "Freshman daily experience: Brief overview of a qualitative study."

concerned, respectively, with [a] social development, [b] stress, [c] family dynamics, and [d] sociodemographics, attitudes and expectations; and (3) during their first eight weeks, a daily diary whose structure was guided by a 15-page manual designed for this study. Interview transcripts and student diaries collectively yielded about 5,000 pages of text which was then subjected to thematic analysis intended to discover underlying patterns. In turn, the use of multiple method proved indispensable to the construction of an adequate account of the lived experience of student subjects.

Thematic analysis yielded a total of 36 themes divided into three domains: personal, interpersonal, and environmental. The results revealed in detail the complexity of the freshman experience.

The singular preoccupation of subjects on arrival at university was with **getting connected**: the process of establishing a network of friends who, with parents and lovers, were overwhelmingly seen as the most significant others on campus. It was to them that subjects went for support and succor, and it was with them that they spent the bulk of their out-of-class time (when not alone, studying). In practice, it was these relationships that, in large measure, **defined** the university experience for subjects, for good or ill.

This said, relations with new friends were often problematic. For one thing, they required sustained effort and absorbed considerable time, for friends simultaneously represented sources of support and demand. As such, maintenance of these relationships was frequently at the expense of time spent on academic matters, a sacrifice most subjects made quite consciously. For another, initial expectations that roommates, for example, would become best friends, were seldom realized. "Best friend" relationships characterized only one third of female subjects; the balance became "intimate acquaintances" typified by affective distance.

Others significant to subjects included parents, old friends, and lovers. Going away to university meant physically leaving these others behind. Psychologically, however, for all subjects, these relationships remained both very much alive and highly influential of subject behavior on campus. In each case, the degree of involvement - and thus, the degree of influence - varied as a function of one or more mediating factors.

For old friends, it was salience of the relationship and competition from on-campus others. The time and effort required to sustain such long-distance relationships meant that few relationships survived the first semester. For lovers - 65% of subjects had lovers back home - it was level of stability. Previously stable

relationships survived; 75% of previously unstable relationship were disrupted. For parents, it was family type. Subjects with cordial, supportive relations with parents noted with pleasure a shift towards greater independence and mutual respect. Subjects with conflicted, distant relations with parents complained of continuing to be treated like a child and of being treated like a stranger in their own home.

Further, subjects' professors represented another set of influential figures on campus. The special status of professors made for an ambivalent relationship between them and subjects. Their control over course grades created a status gap that, for most subjects, was perceived as virtually unbridgeable. Further, since most contact took place in the classroom, student images of their professors were social constructions, born only minimally out of actual interaction, and thus at some distance from the real persons. Further, just as professors routinely evaluated subjects, they too routinely evaluated professors, first, in terms of any covert rules or standards they might employ in assigning grades (the hidden curriculum) and, second, in terms of their expertise as teachers. In turn, this acted to create and sustain distance between subjects and professors. In general, then, professors as persons played a decidedly minor role in the daily experience of subjects.

This emphasis on persons significant and/or influential in the lives of subjects casts in relief the extent to which the movement from high school to university involved a major transition. Indeed, subjects' comments made clear that the shift in question involved massive dislocation in their daily lives, including their daily routine (eg., sleeping, eating, residence, event scheduling), academic life (eg., workload, class size, semester system); and, social relations (eg., making new friends, changes in pre-existing relationships with parents, friends, and lovers).

Among most subjects, the combined result was the experience of significant transitional stress. About 30% experienced such stress as an **enjoyable challenge**. Consequently, their adjustment was complete within about a month, with very limited culture shock, disorientation or homesickness. About 20% were at the other extreme: they experienced transition as **overwhelmingly demanding**. Their adjustment was considerably delayed, up to the end of the semester, with severe culture shock, disorientation and homesickness. Finally, the bulk of subjects, about 50%, were somewhere in the middle. For them, adjustment required six to eight weeks and was associated with varying degrees of culture shock, disorientation and homesickness.

These courses of adjustment were related, in part, to several factors, including pre-existing personal and relational attributes (especially family type), on-going events (especially on-going relations with significant others), and the experience of academic life.

With respect to latter, academic transition, the shift from high school to university was characterized most by **difference**: in class size, anonymity, workload, pressure, pace, the semester system, and (low) external control. Consequently, most subjects experienced the university as involving very high academic demand and, in the process, discovered that their entering grade was an unreliable predictor of their university academic performance; not only did the majority (65%) of subjects' grades drop (one to three grade points), but first semester grades were a much better predictor of second semester performance than high school grades. Indeed, these data suggest that a fair proportion of freshmen may get locked into their first semester average and subsequently find it very difficult to alter.

Such grades changes was one among a range of factors (eg., experience of the workload, impact of culture shock) in which male and female subjects were indistinguishable. In others respects, however, especially in the interpersonal domain, marked gender differences were apparent. While the small number of males in this study render these findings tentative, they are nevertheless in keeping with a growing literature on the subject. Thus, as a group, women preferred intimate involvement with a small group of same-sex others, with self-disclosing 'talk' their preferred activity. Their friendship relationships were typically non-competitive and highly supportive, with little evidence of peer pressure. Women were also quite abstemious with regard to the use of alcohol or drugs; infrequent episodes of drunkenness were unlikely to be marked by antisocial behavior. Finally, women displayed an aesthetic sensibility characterized, on the one hand, by an acute sensitivity to their social environment, and, on the other hand, by a desire to make of their space at the university a home away from home.

This contrasted sharply with male typifications, including superficial relations with a large group of same-sex others, a preference for physical activity as opposed to 'talk', subtle but pervasive competitiveness, peer pressure, excess use of alcohol and/or drugs leading (among a minority) to antisocial behavior, and an

instrumental sensibility which left most largely indifferent of their social and especially their physical environment.

Finally, in light of all of the evidence, it became clear that the daily experience of subjects, **as whole persons**, was complexly derived, and could only be described adequately by means of the interaction between processes across all three domains. For example, relations with parents shaped subjects' daily conduct and, as a function of family type, impacted positively or negative on subjects' self-esteem. Relations with friends and lovers affected subjects' experience of residence life and also indirectly affected academic performance. Conversely, subjects' self-esteem, family type, and residential proximity shaped efforts at the evolution of a peer network. That network, in turn, helped account for subjects' adjustment to residence life.

Thus, what was striking about subjects' accounts of their daily experience was its ecological complexity, with the whole emerging out of the interaction among its constituent domain elements. In consequence, it is both misleading and inaccurate to speak about these subjects as 'students', 'children', 'friends', and the like, for they were singularly none of these things; rather, they were **all** of them simultaneously, striving, as whole persons, to achieve a workable balance between the social and the academic, the personal and the impersonal, the affective and the objective.

This said, subjects' experience in each domain did **not** contribute to this **whole** in equal measure, for subjects' accounts made clear that, at its most meaningful, university life for them was constituted out of their daily interaction with those others significant to them: their parents, their friends (old and new), and their lovers. On balance, during their first semester at university, these relations formed the foreground of their experience, with academic concerns, however important, still relegated to the background.

IMPLICATIONS

Subjects identified a variety of aspects of their freshman experience that was problematic for them. In turn, each of these "problems" is subject to multiple solutions. In this sense, this study suggests a very large number of possible implications. In what follows, a selected range of these implications will be

reviewed - 40 in total. Moreover, given their contingent character, this review should be understood in terms of the exploration of a series of promising options, and **not** a listing a set of fixed prescriptions for change.

This said, a word is in order concerning the manner of their derivation. Of all implications concerning policy and operations (see below), a minority derive from a series of three roundtable discussions. Involving participants representing administrative, student service, faculty, and student constituencies ($n=40$), these groups were convened for three reasons: (1) to canvass for ideas as to how study data might be put to practical use; (2) to draw on the multileveled experience of participants in order to assess the salience and practicability of likely implications; and (3) to ensure that any implications that might be advanced were not wildly inconsistent with what participants knew about the nature of their respective contexts. In short, it was an effort to discover the extent to which the thinking in this document was validated by others with a wide, varied and complex experience of the university. Such validation was consistently received, with the ensuing discussions never anything but wide-ranging, spirited and imaginative. What follows was immensely enriched by these discussions, with participants involvement deeply appreciated.

In turn, participants represented two of the three major audiences to which this study is directed, namely, 'practitioners' (broadly speaking), researchers, and theoreticians. Accordingly, the discussion that follows will be divided into three corresponding sections.

Of these, discussion of **policy and operational implications** proved most complex for several reasons. First, policy and operations encompass many diverse groups. However, given the ecological model on which the present study is based, some 'practice' concerns attach to no particular group, but are rather structural in character. Second, and conversely, other concerns are of a more pragmatic character and do indeed attach to particular segments of the 'practice' population. Third, this study calls attention to an issue seldom raised in others forums, namely, **students' voice**. Rather, most efforts at policy and operations are, despite their sincere intentions, **'adultocentric'** in character. That is, they simultaneously represent two sets of interests: the self-interest of adult policy makers; and, the interests of students **as seen through the eyes of adult policy makers**. Consequently, there are very few venues in which students have the opportunity to speak on their

own behalf of their interests as **these are experienced daily**. Given this study's reliance on diary and interview exemplars, 'practice implications' needed, at least in part, to consciously reflect students' collective voice. Finally, to make such a discussion comprehensible, it needed to be both organized and selective. Accordingly, several organizational schemes were explored, including the most obvious based on occupational grouping (eg., administration, faculty, service staff, etc.).⁴⁷ While this proved somewhat effective, it was enormously limiting, on the one hand, due to the principles which underpin an ecological approach, and, on the other hand, because these implications, while implemented by staff, are nevertheless targeted on shaping student experience. For these reasons, the discussion of 'practice' implications will be organized around **five** central metathemes, namely, **cross-linkages, connections, academic transition, stress and adjustment, and gender**. In each case, first principles (where applicable) and implications will be listed, followed by a brief discussion of each. Whenever examples taken from the University of Guelph are used, they are to be understood as referring to general processes applicable across North American universities.

Policy and Operational Implications

Cross-Linkages. The metatheme of **cross-linkages** emphasizes, more than any other, both the ecological character of freshman experience as well as the macrostructural nature of the university. These divergent aspects of the freshman period are reflected in the following first principles as guides to the translation of the findings into policy and operational implications:

Let the environment fit the student, not the student fit the environment.

The university macrostructure is a primary source of induced freshman transitional stress.

The first principle has increasingly come to be accepted in universities across North America, particularly in the United States (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). This is so both as a reflection of the widespread dissemination of **student development theory** (Benjamin, 1986) as well as a specific result of efforts

⁴⁷ Program type (eg., orientation, residence life, vocational counselling, etc.) was similarly considered as an organizing principle and rejected for the same reason.

to reverse high levels of student attrition (Noel et al., 1985). The practical results have included increasing interest in the freshman experience - witness the popularity of **The First Year Experience** Conferences - and increasing attention to programming designed to enhance the quality of the learning environment as well as make university life more congenial for first year students.

In this context, the second principle is likely to be rather less well received and likely reflects on-going ambivalence about freshman students. By implication, the literature continues to emphasize students' responsibility for any difficulties they may encounter during the first semester, for example, in terms of lack of academic readiness, level of cognitive complexity, and so on. While such observations are entirely legitimate, they nevertheless skirt quietly around a prominent finding of the present study, namely, that the structure of the university exacerbates any student limitations while directly impeding adjustment across a range of dimensions. It does **not** do so purposely, but rather as an unintended consequence of a range of built-in structural constraints.

Consequently, efforts to reduce or remove impediments to student adjustment point to the need for substantial **de-structuring** of university systems. The following implications are oriented towards that end.

1. **Implementation of a modified semester system.**
2. **Elaboration of student orientation programming.**
3. **Improved background training of university staff.**
4. **Enhancement of liaison programming.**
5. **Modification of parent orientation programming.**
6. **Shift in the focus of the first semester.**

Modified semester system. The lock-step character of the semester system is a major source of student transitional stress. One possibility is to move to a 'year' system. However, there are strengths and weaknesses in either system, such that movement to a 'year' system offers no immediate solution. Rather, modification of the semester system designed to ameliorate its major limitations appears to offer a more congenial response.

One possibility might involve changing the definition of a 'full course load' from five courses to four. This would free up more time for student social interaction, reduce academic demand, slow down the pace of academic activities, and thus give students more opportunity to discover how the 'system' works.

Another option might be to couple a four course load with mandatory attendance (for credit) at University 101. The latter is a course that has been used in a number of universities and is specifically designed to address a range of freshmen student needs (Jewler, 1989). In addition to being well received by attending students, it has been successful in reducing subsequent attrition (Fidler & Hunter, 1989).

A third alternative might see retention of a five course load but with not less than two courses offered on the 'year' system. On the one hand, this would have the effect of reducing demand by spreading out some of the work over the entire year. On the other hand, it would allow students to carry over lessons learned in the first semester to the second, but not at the cost of reduced grades.

Student orientation programming. For purposes of this discussion, two categories of orientation programming may be distinguished: **sustained** and **situational**.

The former refer to pre-semester Summer programs that involve bringing large numbers of admitted students on campus for between two days and a week. Such students are provided tours of the campus, information about the university, the nature of the academic demand they can anticipate, and engaged in various social activities. The latter refer to various formally staged activities, typically set during the first week of the freshman semester. Again, the accent is on some combination of information dissemination and social activity, with the latter often emphasizing large group activities. In light of data from the present study, sustained activities are problematic in four respects: they are voluntary, brief, accent large group activities, and do not adequately prepare students for the reality of the freshman experience.

Subjects, all participants in the summer orientation program, were nearly all positive about the program at the university, with the primary emphasis on the social relations established in this way. The result was to establish some early new friends whose presence during the first semester assisted student adjustment. This suggests that those who did not choose to attend were at some adjustment disadvantage compared to orientation participants. If so, this argues that all newly admitted students be **required** to attend

summer orientation, thus making the latter the true beginning of the academic year. Moreover, in order to avoid unnecessary hardship for less advantaged students, attendance might be made free of charge or at less than cost, the up-front costs compensated for later by reduced attrition (see Levitz & Noel, 1989).

Next, it now seems clear that the freshman experience is necessarily multidimensional in character. Integration, at an experiential level, of even part of this range takes time. This is especially likely given that these efforts at integration occur under stress which is known to reduce human learning effectiveness (Whitman et al., 1986). This implies extending the duration of summer orientation in order to provide time for this integration to occur. While it remains unclear what time interval might be best, experience suggests that two weeks would be a considerable improvement over two days.

Third, the accent of many such programs (see Perigo & Upcraft, 1989; Upcraft, 1984) on large group activities reflects the adultocentric character of the thinking which underpins such programs. Subject reports indicate that not everyone, especially females, were either comfortable or happy with this emphasis. This implies the addition of some element of **choice** coupled with **programming diversity**.

This study makes plain that freshman students were not all of a piece. Rather, study subjects displayed amazing heterogeneity. Orientation programming might mirror such diversity, not only in content, but also in the manner in which relevant information is delivered. Some subjects were intensely verbal, such that a diary was ideally suited to the way they operated. Others were more visual while still others reported a more auditory bent. There is no reason why such variation in data input preferences might not be accommodated. Similarly, while some subjects enthused about the large group activities, others were bewildered by them, and would have preferred to interact with a small group of others and in an activity which accented 'talk', not 'doing'. Finally, subjects' capacity to take in and integrate the information provided varied significantly. For a minority, much was retained, while for a majority only those bits of information of immediate relevance to them were recalled. This implies prioritizing information. Key bits of information might be displayed using a range of presentation modalities and speeds, while others might be made selectively available by being tied to specific voluntary activities.

The thrust of these options would be, first, to maximize the retention of standard bits of critical information, while, second, maximizing the opportunity for each participant to become acquainted with one or more peers. Of the two, the latter is in fact the simpler of the two. It merely requires that likely acquaintances be placed in close proximity over some period of time (see also, *Connections*). Thus, the real challenge of orientation programming is to ensure that critical information retention occurs while creating a series of contexts conducive to peer group formation and then allowing this to evolve on its own, free of intrusive constraints.

Finally, this study makes plain that much that was critical to the freshman experience was **not** part of orientation programming, especially its affective character. In a sense, there is no way in which the 'real' experience of the freshman semester can be duplicated during orientation. Indeed, unless and until the students in question are **ready** to hear the messages of that experience, they will go unheard no matter how strenuously they are pursued. Even so, there is no reason why at least the critical dimensions of the experience should not be noted and the contours of each dimension described. Thus, a final possibility is that the present study, together with a handful of other studies relevant to specific dimensions, become part of the information package conveyed to orientation participants.

These possibilities for change apply as much to sustained as to situational activities. In both cases, the limited capacity of freshmen to absorb new information cannot be overemphasized. As subjects made clear, the primary response of many students during the first two weeks on campus is that of **disorientation**. It follows that most subjects absorbed only that information that was immediately relevant. Thus, later in the semester, student complaints that they never got certain information and orientation personnels' response that they did get it were both true; while the latter may well have emitted the information, many of the former literally never heard it. In this context, all information is not and should not be seen as equally relevant. Under conditions of considerable transition stress, as certainly prevails during much of the first semester, it is only important that the most critical information get through; all other information might be available on request.

Improved training. Adultocentrism, common among orientation personnel, is just as likely among faculty and other staff. Such a perspective is characterized by plans based on unverified and often empirically false assumptions about student character. Such a view is perhaps exemplified by staff and/or faculty who advance plans based on the extent to which they 'know students.' Subjects reports indicate that such claims were typically either only partly true or were entirely false.

To do away with policy and operational efforts based on 'adultocentric' thinking, it is critical that faculty and staff have the opportunity to hear the authentic voice of freshman students. One solution is to encourage increased direct interaction between students and faculty and staff. Indeed, this study could be used as such a vehicle. The round table discussions referred to above might be one way in which this could be done.

Liaison programming. Liaison programming refers to the contacts university staff make with high school students in order to encourage them to attend the institution they represent. Given the limited pool of eligible high students and the limited number of universities in any given area, this is a highly competitive affair, with each institution striving to appear more attractive than its neighbours. In this process, there is a tendency for the less favorable aspects of the freshman experience to be swept under the carpet. While certainly understandable, subject reports made clear that such incomplete information can only have done these students a disservice.

In turn, this suggests two related possibilities. First, one reason why liaison staff for colleges and universities do not dwell on the negative aspects of freshman life is simply that they are unaware of many of them. In this sense, exposure to this study and other related efforts might be considered. Second, another reason to avoid the negative is that it may undermine their competitive 'edge'. However, to the extent that the experience of subjects is commonplace, and there is every reason to believe that it is, this fear is misplaced. Rather, all universities would likely find themselves tarred by the same brush. More importantly, it also suggest an additional basis for competitive advantage, namely, the ability to report on the existence of programs specifically designed to combat transitional stress.

A final point here concerns the importance of conveying a true account of the freshman experience to high school personnel. Despite exposure to accounts of university life by their high school teachers and guidance counsellors, most subjects were quite unprepared for the reality of the freshman experience. In part, this is likely unavoidable. No words can possibly substitute for the reality of being at university for the first time. However, there is ample evidence that the more people know about an impending experience (eg., a surgical procedure), the more quickly they adjust to its demands. There is every reason to expect that the same would be true of student entry into university. Consequently, high school personnel in possession of a true account of the freshman experience can convey that to the students in their charge and thus perhaps facilitate their later adjustment on arrival on campus.

Parent orientation programming. Many universities across North America now have some form of parent orientation programming. While programming content varies somewhat, most such efforts may be characterized as involving a one-shot presentation which purports to describe the typical experience of freshman students. Their intent is to diffuse parental anxiety, establish the basis for realistic parental expectations, and indicate how parents may subsequently be helpful to their university-bound offspring.

In light of the present study, such efforts are misguided in at least four respects. First, such presentations are substantively incomplete. They tend to emphasize the psychology of freshman students while giving short shrift to the environmental and relational contexts in which freshman operate. As such, they present freshman life as substantially **less complex** than in fact it is, and thus unintentionally obfuscate more than they clarify. Indeed, indirectly, they convey to students that the non-academic aspects of their daily experience during the first semester are unimportant and not what this period at university is **really** all about.

This study and related efforts present quite a different portrait of student life, and it is this, in all its messy complexity, that parents need to hear.⁴⁸ Exposure to such data would help parents understand the

⁴⁸ Through media exposure of the results of this study, parents of would be university freshman have already begun to ask for copies of this monograph.

varied responses of their student offspring. It would also confront them, as parents, with their real involvement - constructive or destructive - in their son or daughter's university experience.

Second, presented material invariably emphasizes the transitional character of the first semester for students. While true, such statements are clearly incomplete. The first semester also involves a major transition for the families of these students. Indeed, in some cases, parents may have a harder time of the first semester than their student offspring. Exposure to an authentic account of student experience should thus raise a variety of questions in the minds of parents, in some cases no doubt with disquieting results. It might also promote direct discussion between parents and children regarding how their family works and how it might work differently.

Third, offered once only, such presentations underestimate the extent to which parent involvement is on-going throughout the first semester. In this sense, interested parents would benefit from an on-going supply of information concerning events, activities and issues important on campus, and from an independent source, **not** their student offspring. For example, most universities publish a student newspaper, but it is seldom routinely supplied to parents. Similarly, a periodic newsletter oriented to the interests and concerns of parents - much like the related documents supplied to university alumni - might also be helpful.

Finally, while most freshmen will only encounter minor problems during the first semester, some will confront more serious difficulties. At present, student service personnel (eg., personal counsellors) are available to assist **on request**. But many freshman students, especially if they are male, refuse to seek professional assistance. Instead, they make do, either on their own, or with the assistance of peers, lovers and/or parents. In such cases, parents need to be in contact with one or two persons at the university who **know their son or daughter** and who can provide them with sufficient information to arrive at an informed judgement as to what (if anything) they might do to help. In most universities, such an individual (or individuals) does not exist. In the next major section (see below, **Connections**), the identity of such an individual (or individuals) will be suggested.

All of this is simply to recognize that parents **do** influence their student offspring. Thus, the University has two choices. It can do nothing, as it does now, and allow that influence to vary randomly.

Alternately, it can take action to harness that influence, seeing it as a resource available for use in the aid of freshman student adjustment. The foregoing discussion of parent orientation programming has argued in favor of the latter course.

First semester focus. Finally, it would appear that faculty and students have rather divergent views as to the primary purpose of the first semester. The former define it as academic, and, explicitly, the latter would agree. However, through their behavior, it is apparent that social processes in fact predominate. In practice, academic and social objectives conflict, creating a dilemma for freshman students. There are too few hours in the day to do both properly, so that students are repeatedly faced with having to select one and forego the other, and always at some cost to the one left out.

Subject reports suggest that there is no absolute solution to this dilemma. At the same time, they suggest that at least the conflict between them may be lessened by recognizing that, in making the transition to a new and foreign setting, social demands must be met **before** serious academic effort becomes practicable (see Upcraft, 1985; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). This is to suggest that **time** for social network construction must be granted students before additional academic demands apply.

One option has already been noted above, namely, to implement some form of modified semester system. A second, concurrent option might be to extend the **first** semester. The choice of how long an extension would be best would necessarily involve a compromise between competing concerns. On the one hand, administrative and logistical concerns speak to the need for a transition period between the end of the Spring semester and the beginning of the Fall semester. Further, an early start of the Fall semester would entail specific additional costs touching, for example, on food services and residence life systems. On the other hand, the majority of study subjects adapted to the university context relatively quickly, typically within the first three or four weeks. In addition, early start up would exclude the faculty, so that no new burden would fall on them or their support staff. A reasonable compromise might thus involve expansion of the Fall semester from its present 13 weeks to perhaps 16 or 17 weeks. This might be accomplished by using summer orientation to mark the true start of the semester. Beginning, say, in the first or second week of August, it would be mandatory and include registration as well as orientation. Under the guise of

"orientation", the primary task of freshman students would be to establish connections with new friends, re-establish them with old friends, and, in general, construct a working social network, free of competing academic demands, that would carry them through the subsequent semester.

This option is intended to accomplish **three** things: lessen the difficulty associated with developing a social network **and** beginning the new academic year at the same time; allow orientation to the new campus, the new people, and the new year to occur gradually; and provide time for freshmen to absorb and integrate all the new information relevant to university life free of the distortion typical of humans operating under tremendous stress.

While likely reducing the conflict between academic and social demand, this option raises as many questions as it answers. For example, it does not specify with whom freshman students are to form these new social network. This and related questions will be addressed in discussing the next major metatheme,

Connections

Connections. Subject reports made plain that social relations with a limited range of significant others were central to student adjustment during the first semester. In turn, this suggest the **two** first principles that will guide our thinking in the area of (social) **connections**. They are:

Social relations with significant others are salient to the freshman experience.

Ready formation of relations to significant others requires, as a prerequisite, a context characterized by a human scale.

The first principle needs little elaboration; the point is pervasive throughout the data set, as is the reason for this student imperative. The second principle, while less obvious, is equally pervasive. Repeatedly, subjects report getting 'lost' in large groups or crowds, and of dealing with that through psychological shrinkage. Similarly, the operative social networks of most subjects, especially the women, typically involved a handful of significant others. Thus, social contexts below a certain scale appear conducive to the formation

of meaningful social relations. Above that scale, subjects used cognitive means to redefine the context to within the desired scale.⁴⁹

Taken together, both principles support a series of implications whose twin objectives are to create contexts on a human scale and promote connections between students within those contexts.

7. **Creation of student cohorts.**
8. **Development of student and faculty mentoring systems.**
9. **Mindful organization of freshman residence halls.**
10. **Use of roommate matching methods.**
11. **Move to relationship training.**
12. **The question of costs.**

Student cohorts. Student reports assert and residence life research confirms (Benjamin, 1988b) that peer connections are based primarily on proximity and similarity. If so, this suggests that maximizing both attributes should contribute to a context in which peer connections should occur most readily. In operational terms, this translates into the notion of **student cohorts**.

A student cohort is simply defined as a limited number of students who are assigned, based on shared attributes, to a given group and who share a range of experiences together through time as members of that group. Here, small size is important, for it allows all members of the group to get to know all other members. Membership in a group distinct from all other groups serves the purposes of shaping a shared student identity while promoting the development of community. Assignment criteria remain unclear, with a range of attributes having yielded inconclusive results in that portion of the residence literature concerned with roommate matching (Benjamin, 1988b). One variable which appears prominent in the present study and which has never been used towards this end is **family type**. Other attributes having face validity in this

⁴⁹ This is reminiscent of Wicker's (1979) **manning theory** which concerns the ratio of population size to seating, and thus distinguishes between overmanned, undermanned and optimally manned settings. With respect to freshman students, Wicker argues in favor of **undermanned settings** or **smallness**.

regard include age, race, ethnocultural group, gender, academic competence (eg., grade average), academic program or major, and family social class (see Upcraft, 1989). On an experimental basis, using the total population of in-coming freshmen, permutations and combinations of these attributes might be explored. Finally, just as cohort members would share key attributes, so they would share key experiences, including a common residence, involvement in common academic programming, and time, that is, with minor variation, student cohorts would remain intact throughout at least their first two undergraduate years.

This vision of how the freshman experience might be re-organized is not original. Rather, an experimental version of such an option, called **AKADEMIA**, will be enacted by Dean John Vanderkamp at the University of Guelph in Fall, 1990. With a maximum enrollment of 200, this multidisciplinary arts and science program will involve 10 courses over two semesters, its own faculty, and a common residence.

In light of the present study, such an effort has enormous potential to contribute positively to the quality of the freshman experience. However, as Whiteley (1982, 1989; Whiteley & Yokota, 1988) discovered with respect to the Sierra Project, the creation and maintenance of community is no easy task, even under ideal circumstances. Thus, the use of student cohorts would likely be only one among a range of fruitful design features.

Mentoring systems. Another derives from an unanticipated finding of the present study, namely, the tremendous impact on subjects of their involvement with their student service "buddies". It is apparently one thing to relate to a large set of new others; quite another to become involved with and be known by just one other.

This points to the utility of both peer and faculty mentoring systems. Typically one or the other system - seldom both in combination - have a long history (eg., Maverick, 1926) and have been widely used (Johnson, 1989), often with excellent results (eg., Lester & Johnson, 1981). The possibility of employing both together is based on quite divergent findings in the present study. The first concerns the fact that most subjects did not perceive their professors as three-dimensional human beings, and so did not feel comfortable approaching them. Faculty mentoring would be expected to dispense with such stereotypes, and so make faculty members, and the considerable expertise they can bring to bear, more accessible to freshman

students. They would also make such students more accessible to faculty, for students are not alone in the use of stereotyping, perhaps the most pernicious among faculty being that of 'the freshman', the mistaken belief that all freshman share and are thus homogeneous with respect to a set of key attributes. Such efforts would also seek to address the longstanding problems women have experienced in establishing mentoring relationships (Collins, 1983).

Faculty mentors, however, are likely to be problematic with respect to the sort of intimate contact achieved between subjects and their "buddies". In this respect, a second significant finding was that subjects were most likely to be self-disclosing with their same-sex peers. It follows that same-sex peer mentors are likely to have some advantage over faculty mentors in dealing with personal matters, especially as regards freshman confessions of weakness, ignorance, and the like.

A further advantage of having both peer and faculty mentors is that they would bring different strengths to bear in a new role as *parent liaison*. It will be recalled from a previous section that concerned parents would benefit from having access to persons at the university who can speak knowledgeably about their son or daughter. Peer and faculty mentors might fulfill these requirements admirably, one speaking primarily to a given student's academic situation while the other speaks primarily to the student's personal situation. The attribution of divergent interests to faculty and peers is intended to reflect a general trend only; in practice, the relative weight of the academic and the personal would likely vary considerably across student-faculty-peer triads, a likelihood which speaks in favor of having two mentoring relationships as opposed to one only. Finally, in both cases, some form of student consent would be required before such sharing of information could proceed.

Organization of residence halls. As this study demonstrates, most subjects spent most of their out-of-class time in residence. This suggests, and available research confirms (Benjamin, 1988b), that the residence constitutes an extremely influential social environment. Across most North American residence systems, such influence is *uncontrolled*, that is, key variables are simply allowed to vary randomly. Elsewhere,

it has been argued (Benjamin, 1988b) that the alternative is **mindful action**, that is, planned activity based on clear operational goals and on all available data concerning the dynamics of residence environments. For a similar view, see Upcraft (1985, 1989).

In light of previous options with respect to student cohorts, mindful action concerns the organization and composition of residence halls. The former refers to the degree of student control, while the latter refers to both room allocation and the specific mix of student residents. The control issue will be addressed in a subsequent section (see **Stress and Adjustment**); room allocation will be dealt with in a later part of this section (see below, #10), thus leaving student mix to be dealt with here.

In this context, recall subject reports concerning alcohol abuse and related property damage. They raise the twin issues of same-sex and all-freshman residences. With one exception, data from the present study support **neither** as optimal environments for first year students. Instead, these data tend to favor coed and mixed-year residences, while previous comments about cohorts would suggest groupings of limited size. The residence literature (Benjamin, 1988b) confirms that coed residences are both liberating and constraining environments, undermining pernicious gender stereotypes while restricting the likelihood of various forms of antisocial behavior. There is related evidence that the presence of upperclassmen, albeit in limited numbers (Upcraft, 1989), has similar effects, and may also impact positively on freshman GPA (Benjamin, 1988b). Indeed, the only caveat here is that living among a population of freshman is **not** ideally suited to the development of upperclassmen (Benjamin, 1988b)! The solution may be to limit their stay to one or two semesters at most, and either pay them to live in residence or allow them to do so free of charge. Either would likely be an attractive offer given the comparatively high cost of living off campus.

The one exception, noted above, concerns single gender residences. While this is contraindicated with respect to men, the present study suggests this may not be the case with respect to women. Several female subjects lived under such circumstances, found it highly appealing, and noted few of the disturbances

common among subjects living in or visiting all-male residences. Accordingly, while coed residences would likely continue as the norm, several small-scale all-female wings might be retained.⁵⁰

Roommate matching. Students assigned to joint living quarters do not just reside together. Rather, whatever their initial wishes, they necessarily engage in an on-going relationship set within a larger social context. Both relational and contextual features are critical to understanding what transpires between such student pairs.

In relational terms, the optimal arrangement is one in which students partners can establish and maintain a cordial and mutually supportive relationship. As we have seen, the current manner in which roommate pairs are constituted, through random assignment, produces a successful outcome in less than half the cases examined. This suggests that **selective assignment**, that is, roommate matching, might produce better outcomes.

This said, it remains unclear what selection criteria would likely yield these superior results. To date, a range of criteria have been tried (eg., based on program, personality and/or habits) without marked success (Benjamin, 1988b; Upcraft, 1985). This is hardly suprising, however, since these efforts have sought to shape relational outcomes while selecting on individual attributes, a clear contradiction in terms.

One alternative, suggested by the present study, is that of **family type**. Students accustomed to similar or related patterns of family interaction would likely already share the ground rules which define **what** 'appropriate closeness' is, **how** it is to be achieved, **when** it has been achieved, and how it is to be **maintained** or **changed**. Conversely, interaction between students from disparate family types would presumably share none of these things. As such, their initial efforts to relate would likely be seriously hampered by the fact that the other behaves in a 'foreign language', thus requiring continual and exhausting efforts at translation into familiar terms of reference. In turn, such pairs would likely be inordinately prone to mutual misunderstanding based on frequent and repeated errors of translation.

⁵⁰ The utility of these options is limited by the proportion of freshman students who live in residence. Across North American universities, this is likely to vary tremendously, from 100% to 0%. At the University of Guelph, about 60% do so.

It remains unclear exactly which family types would be best matched with which others, and how close the congruence would need to be. Nevertheless, such an option appears to warrant close future attention.

As regards context, what transpires between roommates is **not** independent of the social contexts in which their interaction occurs. This refers both to the immediate environment of their residence floor as well as the more distant environment of parents, lovers, and old friends back home. This suggests, first, that any roommate matching system will always retain some degree of uncertainty or unpredictability since it would be unable to control for perturbations in the social environment; and, second, that roommate and cohort selection should occur in concert, thus dampening environmental perturbation while maximizing the probable impact of roommate matching.

Relationship training. The effectiveness of roommate matching is limited by the substantive patterns under consideration. Recall that some 40% of subjects came from dysfunctional families. In this context, the probable effects of roommate matching are unclear. One possibility is that it may induce relational cordiality, but at the price of propagating or stabilizing dysfunctional patterns. Another is that it may mitigate dysfunction, the more flexible patterns of one undoing the interactional rigidity of the other. A third possibility is that it has no effect, leaving both members of a pair unchanged. Indeed, given the likely variety across a population of roommate pairs, the occurrence of all three possibilities seems likely.

Thus, an additional option concerns developmental programming on residence floors aimed at training student residents in the use of models of functional relating. While such programs have been used previously (Benjamin, 1988b), they remain problematic insofar as such programs tend to employ an individual rather than a family model of relating. In contrast, this option would see programs developed based on a family perspective, with emphasis on data drawn from the family systems and family therapy literatures (see Benjamin, 1988a; Held & Bellows, 1983).

Costs. Finally, establishing and maintaining connections not only requires time and effort, it also costs money. Recall that most subjects arrived at the University from some distance away, and accumulated substantial long distance telephone bills in an effort to remain in touch with parents, lovers and old friends.

These and other data suggest that such contact is vital to freshman adjustment and integration. Accordingly, it should be encouraged in a variety of ways. In most cases, telephone costs were not problematic for subjects. Having come from affluent or relatively affluent families, they could always rely on their parents either to shoulder the financial burden (eg., by calling collect) or defray such expenses when the bill arrived.

However, such was not always the case. A minority of subjects came from families in which their university tuition represented a significant financial hardship. Similarly, these subjects were often dependent on either a scholarship and/or a government bursary or loan. For them, such financial constraints meant less use of the telephone as an aid to connection and more reliance on letter writing, a modality they seldom found entirely satisfactory.

The result is a contradiction. While less affluent students are at a disadvantage with respect to connections, the salience of such connections is independent of financial status; poor students need the support of these others no less than their affluent counterparts. Recognition of such relational equality would have the University defray or subsidize some of the connection costs of less affluent freshmen while realizing these costs in terms of reduced attrition.⁵¹

The thrust of these efforts would be to formally recognize the vital role connections play in the lives of freshman students, and thus to initiate policies and operational procedures supportive of such efforts. In turn, the University would benefit, directly, by improving freshman student adjustment, integration and performance, and, indirectly, by reducing the traditional attrition rate of 33% (Levitz & Noel, 1989).

Academic Transition. For many freshman students, the academic transition from high school to university is extremely difficult. This is reflected in the form of widespread performance decrements and the nearly universal experience of being overwhelmed by the pace and the workload. Furthermore, such

⁵¹ For example, eligible students might be responsible for phone bills up to a fixed maximum per month above which a proportional reduction would apply.

experience is not restricted to mediocre or even average students; rather, it was just as evident among the 43% of study subjects who entered University with an 'A'.

Such findings establish the context for the first principle that will guide our thinking in the area of academic transition.

Academic programming for freshman students should be front-end loaded.

The notion of 'front-end loading' derives from the work of Levitz and Noel (1989) whose primary concern is with student retention. This they argue turns on offering freshman students the sort of experience that will encourage rapid and sustained social and academic integration. Students confronted with bad professors and boring subject matter will tend to go elsewhere for experience they find more relevant and engaging. In turn, this means that freshman should get academic priority in terms of both people and resources aimed at engaging students early,⁵² keeping them over the long-term, and ensuring that unavoidable transitional stress is never more than manageable.

In light of the data from the present study, this approach to academic transition supports a series of implications:

13. **Change in the academic reward structure for faculty teaching freshman courses.**
14. **Creation of a 'freshman' faculty.**
15. **Mandatory faculty training in teaching approaches at the university level.**
16. **Shift in the use of teaching methods in favor of 'active' as opposed to 'passive' approaches.**
17. **Preference for optimal class size.**
18. **Use of some form of transitional programming.**
19. **Limitation on student program commitments.**
20. **Programming for mandatory training in academic skills.**

⁵² The work of Myers (1981 cited in Levitz & Noel, 1989) indicates that the bulk of attrition in the freshman year occurs within the first two to six weeks.

Academic reward structure. Subject reports indicate that the quality of teaching at the freshman level is anything but uniform. Some professors apparently excel at this demanding endeavor, and are enthusiastic in the process. Others are much less effective, and convey the impression of marking time while en route to more exciting activities elsewhere. Both types of performance raise questions about **how** such faculty are rewarded and **who** they are. The first issue will be addressed below, the second will be deferred to the next section.

In many institutions across North America, the reward structure denigrates those who teach freshman courses in three ways. First, teaching activities per se are undervalued in comparison to research, publishing or even administrative work, especially in terms of advancement and tenure. Second, there is no greater reward attached to teaching freshman as opposed to upper level courses despite the fact that the time and effort required vary significantly. Third, the opinions and responses of first year students are accorded less weight than those of upperclassmen, especially insofar as freshmen are less likely to advance their views even if someone were prepared to listen.

Consequently, there is very little incentive on the part of faculty to give to the task of teaching freshman the extra time, effort and commitment that it requires. Not only are there no additional rewards for doing so, there are none for doing so especially well nor are any rewards at risk for doing so especially badly. Rather, students alone suffer or benefit directly from such variation. Yet the work of Gaff and Wilson (1971, 1975) made abundantly clear that freshman academic success is directly related to the quality of teaching.

This suggests the need to rethink the University reward structure so as to reflect the value placed on teaching per se, and especially on teaching freshman students. One option would be to directly reward professors who teach freshman class, either by adjusting pay scales accordingly, reducing the number of required teaching hours or some combination of both. Another possibility would be to establish standardized criteria for teaching quality and then use them - not students responses - to regularly assess the performance of freshman level faculty. Those with a rating above the norm would accrue additional rewards; those with ratings below the norm would place existing rewards at risk.

Such practices begin to address one of the major sources of academic transition for subjects, namely, variation in the quality of teaching.

'Freshman' faculty. By definition, freshman students are not like upperclass students. They lack any experience of the teaching practices which typify the University, do not know what **exactly** is expected of them, and, in general, are just discovering what it is they need to know and how they might acquire such information. This has important implications for students, several of which will be discussed in subsequent sections. But it also has important implications for faculty teaching practice. Specifically, it leads to twin conclusions, namely, that **not** everyone can or should be allowed to teach freshman classes, and that teaching such classes well requires **superior** rather than average or inferior teaching skills.

If so, then one option concerns the creation of a **freshman faculty**. This would involve, as Levitz and Noel (1989) suggest, assigning the very best teachers to freshman courses. Such faculty might be selected on the basis of such criteria as teaching experience, teaching excellence (see above), reported enjoyment from involvement with freshman students, and, of course, willingness to be involved with such students. It might also involve such technology as has been used in this study to discover student's day-to-day assessment of the faculty in question.

Mandatory faculty training. Construction of a freshman faculty based on teaching excellence alone, however, is inadequate. That a group of professors are well accepted by students and colleagues is no guarantee that they are, in fact, doing the best they can. This derives from the paradox, true only in higher education, that receipt of a Ph.D. automatically means that the person in question is not only a fine scholar, but also a fine teacher. One has only to take a range of courses at any university to discover otherwise. Some scholars make fine teachers, others decidedly do not.

The end result is a type of unwarranted confidence, for in fact there is an entire practice discipline which specializes in teaching teachers how to teach (eg., journals such as **College Teaching** or newsletters such as **The Teaching Profession**). Indeed, most experts in this field are themselves university professors. Given the profound impact good or bad teaching can have on freshman, an option associated with a freshman faculty might involve mandatory teacher training (see Weimer, 1990). This would involve **three**

processes. First, thorough assessment of their current teaching practices, and second, teacher training in the use of methods suitable for small and/or large classrooms. Subject reports suggest that the latter would be especially crucial, since large classrooms proved the most threatening and difficult.

The third process might involve exposing faculty to data such those presented in this study. In the main, faculty only have the opportunity to see the academic side of students. Given the nature of faculty responsibilities, it might therefore involve only a small jump for faculty to conclude that they ought only be concerned with that side of student life, discounting all other facets. The present study suggests that such an approach might contribute to student perception that faculty are distant and uncaring, and sometimes behave in ways that are arbitrary and unjust. Helping faculty be more sensitive to the social priorities of freshman students might support faculty behavior likely to promote a more sympathetic and supportive relationship between students and faculty, and one that emphasizes the shared character of the teaching-learning enterprise.

'Active' approaches. A case in point concerns the use of 'active' as opposed to 'passive' teaching methods, and speaks to both teaching effectiveness as well as student cognitive development. As noted in the **Introduction**, one of the families of student development theory concerns cognitive matters. Several theorists in this area, most notably Perry (1970), see freshman students as primitive 'dualists' who assume that there is a right answer to every question, that professors have all the answers, and thus expect to passively receive all the answers to the questions at hand.

Note that such a view conceptualizes such a way of 'seeing' as residing 'inside' freshman students rather than in their academic environment. The present study qualifies such a view in two ways. First, it suggests that, at least in large classes, student behavior is an entirely appropriate response to a classroom setting which both requires and rewards precisely such passivity. Recall, for example, the professor who would have liked to have had his students write essays but, given the large class size, was constrained to evaluate what they had learned using multiple choice tests. Second, there was little evidence of such primitive thinking with respect to various relational problems. Indeed, subjects' decision-making in dealing simul-

taneously with the competing demands of parents, lovers and old friends was nothing if not sophisticated and complex.

This suggests that labeling freshman students as 'dualists' may be more a self-fulfilling prophecy than a prescription for teaching practice. It also suggests that teaching effectiveness may be enhanced by emphasizing 'active' as opposed to 'passive' teaching methods. Unlike the latter, the former would encourage student involvement and shared responsibility for the learning process, with faculty seen more as teaching resources than as 'instructors' or, worse still, as 'lecturers'. The former would also assume that freshman students are the sophisticated thinkers this study shows them to be; it would remain to develop active teaching methods to harness and direct that intelligence.

Optimal class size. Active teaching, however, is not without its own difficulties. While such methods can be used with large classes, they are clearly more suitable for small ones. In turn, this calls attention to the difficulties most subjects experienced with large classes, and Wicker's (1979) emphasis on the desirability of "undermanned settings" for freshman students.

Ideally, these data suggest that all freshman classes be restricted in size. However, this fails to consider either the size of the freshman population, the amount of classroom and faculty resources, or the requirements of the subject being taught. The combination of the first two items may make it impossible in practical terms to do away entirely with large classes. The third may make such a move undesirable, since some subjects may lend themselves more than others to presentation in large as opposed to small classroom formats.

One possibility would involve a compromise directed towards optimal class sizes. This would seek to match usually limited university resources with freshman requirements and the character of the subject matter. The outcome, while allowing for some variation, would limit to two the number of large classes to which any freshman was subjected and routinely couple such courses with small group seminars. Further, in light of previous alternatives concerning a modified semester system, courses involving large classes might be restricted to one semester in duration whereas courses involving small classes might vary from a semester to a year.

Transitional programming. After one semester, the global response of many subjects to their academic experience was one of confusion. The disparate content and the varied thematic thrusts of their five courses left them with no clear picture of where they were headed academically and no clear sense of how all of this material somehow added up. The task of substantive integration was theirs and many felt unequal to the task. Moreover, the rational basis for the differences in academic content and teaching methods in university as opposed to high school, and the larger role of the university in society, were left for subjects to discover. Many, if not most, simply failed to do so.

This speaks to the academic context of the university system. At present, this context is left implicit. Consequently, for a large proportion of freshman students, that context will remain opaque, thus making it harder rather than easier for such students to 'connect' to the university, both as a general concept as well as a specific place to work. On the assumption that enhancing such a 'connection' would reduce stress and speed adjustment, one possibility concerns various forms of academic programming specifically designed to ease student academic transition.

Several examples relevant at the University of Guelph include **University 101**, **Introduction to Higher Learning**, **At Risk Students**, and **relaxation of some of the rules leading to debarment**. At the University of Guelph, **University 101** is a programmatic umbrella which encompasses a range of specific programs aimed at freshman academic transition. However, at other universities (eg., University of South Carolina), it is a credit course aimed at introducing freshman students to higher education, including some instruction with respect to requisite academic skills. **Introduction to Higher Learning** is a credit course that will be offered in Fall, 1990. It will be designed to examine the university as an institution, explore ways of acquiring knowledge, and touch on student personal and career development. **At Risk** is currently offered as a mandatory non-credit course for debarred students seeking readmission to the university. Its focus is on study skills, personal and career planning and development.

In this context, an additional option would involve **aggressive early outreach to students at risk of academic failure**. At present, intervention occurs only after a student has failed. As subject reports indicate, however, this is far too late, especially insofar as academic failure is **not** a single event, but rather a complex,

cumulative process which unfolds through time. Further, especially among males, it is seldom a process which students are prepared to acknowledge openly nor are many males students voluntarily prepared to seek early intervention for impending failure. This suggests the possibility of identifying such students early, before they fail, with an intervention program designed to bolster social support while augmenting specific academic skills.

Finally, debarment rules refers to relaxation in selected cases of grade standards which would formerly have automatically resulted in debarment. This important change recognizes that university enrolment involves more than academic performance alone. Rather, a range of personal and social events and processes may legitimately interfere with performance, and thus constitute mitigation with respect to debarment.

What most of these program elements have in common is a substantial degree of intrusion in the daily lives of freshman students. A few years ago, such intrusiveness would have been widely regarded as unacceptable. What has changed is an increasing appreciation of the level of challenge represented by the transition to university life. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the present study. Such data, in turn, rationalizes the need for such intrusiveness, making clear that reducing transition stress to manageable levels requires such varied effort.

Student program commitments. A related issue concerns freshman program commitments. As subject reports indicate, program choice was usually an idiosyncratic process and was often a confusing one. This is consistent with the work of Titley and Titley (1980) who showed that not only were many undergraduate students undecided as to their major, but having selected one, were quite likely to change majors one or more times prior to graduation.

In part, this may relate to inadequate academic advising. It appears that such advising was haphazard among study subjects, a common experience across many North American universities (Ender et al., 1984). Conversely, when done systematically and with an eye towards the 'whole' student, it can make a significant contribution to student development (Ender et al., 1984; Mable & DeCoster, 1981). This suggests the possibility of critically examining the role of academic advising in the program choices of freshman students.

Such an examination would be directed towards increasing the level of sustained interaction between every freshman and their academic advisor.

In part, this may also relate to student lack of readiness to meaningfully make such choice at that point in their university career. Thus, several subjects complained that having to make program choices made little sense to them at a time when they were just discovering what it meant to be in university. An alternate approach would be to see the first year at university as a **transitional year** during which students' primary responsibility would be to discover what program of study they might wish to pursue in the subsequent year. Accordingly, freshman students would be prohibited from making such a choice before they are really capable of doing so on an informed basis.

Training in academic skills. Finally, all subjects complained about their workload, and, in particular, of their difficulty in keeping up to date. It now seems clear that there was no single reason for this; rather, it was the combined result of a range of dimensions, both social and academic. However, with respect to the latter, a key dimension concerns subject academic readiness, particularly with respect to a handful of academic skills, including notetaking, studying, and time management.

At present, most universities offer remedial assistance in all these areas. While laudable, subject reports suggest that such efforts are problematic in two respects: first, they occur while the semester is in progress, thus handicapping these students' academic efforts for part of the critical first semester; and, second, they are voluntary, thus requiring that students acknowledge their own weakness(es) and actively seek assistance. Both aspects of existing remedial programs limit the number of students in need who either will actually receive assistance, or receive it too late, and/or may be provided inappropriate assistance based on students' self-assessment needs.

One option that might obviate these difficulties would involve building assessment and mandatory remediation into the expanded summer orientation program (see above). Subject reports suggest that assessment explore traditional academic skills, but also include the social context(s) in which those skills will be used. In that sense, it would take the form of a fairly wide ranging interview, and would offer freshmen one of their first opportunities to begin to connect to the university by **giving it a specific human face**. Since

the mentoring function already noted above have precisely the same purpose, it would make sense to have each student's mentor(s) involved in the assessment together with student service personnel specialized in the area. To the extent that such efforts would be successful, the added costs of such programming would be compensated for by the increased revenues associated with decreased student attrition.

The data thus acquired might then be used to determine whether the student in question requires any remedial assistance and, if so, what sort (eg., notetaking skills) and of what intensity (eg., 20 hours, 40 hours, etc.). Should assistance be required, it could be delivered on a voluntary basis. As noted, however, many students who are judged in need of service might be inclined to refuse it, either by denying the need and/or by refusing to acknowledge its relevance to the up-coming semester. The alternative would be to make such assistance mandatory. This would create an even playing field for all freshman, while limited the duration of that assistance to the pre-semester period. In turn, this would optimize the likelihood that these students would be able to manage their academic demands successfully, thus reducing a major source of transitional stress.

As for those students who encounter difficulty, not due to any skill deficit, but rather due to social complications, mentoring advice seems a likely option, leaving personal and other forms of counselling available on a voluntary basis should mentoring assistance prove inadequate.

The thrust of these efforts is to recognize that, for a substantial proportion of freshman students, making the academic transition from high school to university is far more difficult than either students or faculty think it will be. One possible response is to create an academic climate sympathetic to student difficulties and supportive in such a way as to maximize the likelihood of student academic success.

Stress and Adjustment. While some subjects experienced the first semester primarily in terms of eustress, distress was a far more common response. In part, such stress derived from the pervasive extent to which the transition from high school involved **difference** across a wide spectrum of events and processes. It was also related to the extent to which coming to the University involved movement from a context in

which most of the elements of their life were under their control to one in which they retained control over few, if any, of those same elements.

In turn, these findings suggest the two first principles that will guide our thinking in this section.

Change, in the form of a life transition, is necessarily stressful.

The greater the level of perceived individual control, the lower the extent, severity or duration of stress.

The first statement reflects an understanding widely accepted in the stress literature, namely, that all but the most trivial life change events will necessarily be associated with stress (Miller, 1989). However, the nature of the change will determine the type and severity of the perceived stress, with some events (eg., marriage) associated with eustress while others (eg., job loss, death of a child) are associated with distress (Selye, 1974). In the present context, what this means is that transition to university will *invariably* be experienced as stressful, and there is nothing the University can do to change that. Indeed, there is good reason to think that it should not try, for *some* stress is often associated with growth and development (Benjamin, 1986; Selye, 1974)). However, freshman students are likely to vary widely in their experience of stress. Mild to moderate stress may well be desirable; intense stress is certainly not, and it is the effort to mitigate such extremes that should be the focus of programmatic intervention.

The second statement also taps a well accepted insight, namely, that mitigation of stress is related to the perception of control (Miller, 1989). Events produce stress insofar as they are perceived to create a demand beyond the individual's capacity to respond. Thus, the severity of stress relates to how far beyond capacity the demand is likely to be. When the excess demand is only slight and/or only temporary, the level of perceived stress is likely to be mild to moderate. Conversely, when it is massive and/or permanent, stress is likely to be correspondingly intense. In all likelihood, it was the perception of the latter that accounted for the minority of subjects who experienced intense and prolonged stress, and who were correspondingly slow to adjust. Indeed, it will be recalled that the operational definition of adjustment used here - comfort plus routinization - implies a renewed sense of student control over key features of their physical, academic and social environments.

In this context, several of the implications already explored covertly support student control. Subject reports, however, indicate several ways in which such control might be addressed more directly, all centered on the one context where they spent most of their free time, namely, their residence hall.

21. **Enhanced student ownership of their residential space.**
22. **Permission for students to "own" their own room, and design it accordingly.**
23. **Student input on the interpretation and enforcement of university alcohol and noise policies.**

Student ownership. Subject reports make clear that, as residential students, they were encouraged to behave responsibly, be tolerant of others, and be involved in the life of their "house". It was also apparent, however, that real authority lay **not** with them, but rather with others, including RAs, area managers, and the like. While subjects were informed of the rules, they were asked neither to formulate the rules nor to enforce them. Such lack of control over "their" space may have heightened and/or prolonged subject transitional stress (Schroeder, 1978).

One general alternative is to strive for a balance between the rights and interests of students and the legal obligations of the university to provide for the safety and security of its students. In practice, the latter includes, for example, enforcing statutory limits on alcohol consumption, restricting access to university property to those with an appropriate reason for being there, and ensuring that all university structures meet all applicable building, health, and safety regulations. In practice, the former includes, for example, individual rights concerning freedom of speech and congregation as well as individual interests in practices concerning lifestyle, health and wellness.

Clearly defined, these sets of interests need not conflict. Indeed, the findings of the present study suggest that, where their rights and interests are concerns, responsible behavior by students will be related to the power and the authority they have to shape their residence environment. For example, within the limits of the university's statutory obligations, student ownership of their residences might involve ceding them the collective right to decide on their own rules of acceptable conduct, specifying categories of

unacceptable conduct (and the contexts in which such definitions would apply), and the authority to enforce these rules, up to and including the right to expel students from residence who fail to comply.

In this context, residence life staff would continue to play a vital role, but as resource persons and authority partners. Moreover, as educators, staff would continue to be responsible for residence programming, but with much opportunity for student input.

Given the experience of the Sierra Project (Whiteley, 1982), such an alternative is hardly likely to yield an idealized community of happy, productive student scholars. Rather, it is fraught with difficulties, not least of which is the likelihood of heightened conflict among students as they struggle with selecting and enforcing the rules they want to live by. To the extent that such struggles are true to the life of adults living in a complex society, they may be preferable to the current state of affairs. That is, in which resident students are responsible only for their own conduct since constraints imposed from above absolve them of responsibility for the conduct of anyone else. Such loss of control over their immediate living environment was a key source of transitional stress among study subjects. The alternative discussed above would return some of that control to them, thus reducing one source of transitional stress.

Student room design. A related area of control concerns the design and decoration of students' rooms. Recall that this is where the bulk of study subjects spent most of their time, yet most universities across North America place severe restrictions on the extent to which students can rearrange, decorate and otherwise change their rooms to suite their own tastes and preferences (Benjamin, 1988b). Such policies, often enacted on economic grounds, speak of the lack of student authority or control, and thus of the limited extent to which students are permitted to be involved, either in their own "space" in particular or the university in general.

One alternative, currently in place at several American universities (see Schroeder, 1980), would be to encourage students to "own" their own rooms by designing them to suit their specific requirements. This would involve at least three components. First, students would be provided with modular furniture which they could organize as they saw fit. Second, students would be provided with a modest budget to purchase required supplies (eg., paint, curtain material, sewing supplies, etc.) to enact their design. Finally,

students would be given access to the expertise of diverse university personnel for advice in design and implementation. In some locales, elements two and three might also be extended to the design of residence hallways and stairwells.

That students would be free to "own" their own rooms does not mean that all would in fact do so, since voluntary participation is central to this approach. Indeed, the fact of such variation might be seen as an advantage. In experiments using this approach, program participants were more involved in and satisfaction with both the residence in particular and the university in general than non-participants (Schroeder, 1978). Participants were also less likely to damage property and were more likely to remain at the university to graduation.

In light of the present study, these outcomes appear to derive from students heightened sense of personal control, and the reduction in transitional stress likely associated with it.

Alcohol and noise policies. It will be recalled that female subjects consistently voiced complaints about having to suffer the consequences of male alcohol abuse and the noisy character of some residents. Both illustrate well the advantages and the complexities associated with encouraging student control over important elements of residence life.

Alcohol consumption, for example, combines both statutory and lifestyle elements. For many university students, alcohol is seen as integral to a desired lifestyle and, when used responsibly, need present no difficulties for the university. Conversely, statutory limits on alcohol consumption (via the age of majority) varies widely across North American jurisdictions. This is problematic since the proportion of students who are below that limit varies widely. Similarly, regardless of age, universities are clearly within their rights in seeking to restrain students who abuse alcohol and, in particular, to limit the destructive consequences which often follow such abuse.

As for noise in residence, this is more clearly a lifestyle issue, but no less complex insofar as it addresses efforts to reconcile opposed lifestyles preferences within resident student populations. Even placing those who prefer noisy as opposed to quiet environments in different residence houses offers no easy solution, since noise travels.

In both cases, data from the present study argues in favor of encouraging a substantial degree of student control over making and enforcing relevant rules of residence student conduct. With respect to noise, this might involve collective decisions around such issues as how much noise of what sorts during which periods during the day and the night. Cross-residence agreements among students in contiguous residence houses might also be desirable. As for alcohol, student decisions might touch on such issues as which students would have access to what sorts and quantities of alcohol under what circumstances. Decisions about the penalties for rule violation, including expulsion from residence, might also be considered. Unlike rules related to noise, however, those related to alcohol would require close consultation with the university for the reasons noted above.

Clearly, such efforts would not be simple, and would certainly involve a range of logistical and political problems. Nevertheless, their key advantage would be to challenge the current view of students that alcohol- and noise-related conduct are *somebody else's problem* and return it to where it correctly belongs, with the residents whose lives are directly affected by the conduct in question. In turn, such student control over their lived environment would likely reduce transitional stress and provide a valuable learning experience directed toward enhancing freshman students' sense of personal responsibility for their lives and the lives of other with whom they are involved.

Gender. A final area of concern is that of gender and specifically *gender differences* in the experience of student freshmen. Here, subject reports support the following first principles.

Across many (but not all) dimensions, men and women experience university life differently.

Men and women freshman have much to learn from each other.

The first statement reflects the thrust of much recent feminist scholarship, namely, that the biological differences which distinguish men and women extend to the social and psychological realms (eg., Gilligan, 1982). Thus, in the present study, women evidenced what has here been called an "aesthetic sensibility" whereas men appeared far more instrumental and much less sensitive to relational processes. The significance of this difference is twofold. On the one hand, against the tendency to use male experience as the model

of human behavior, these data support the legitimacy of female experience, ranking it as distinct but coequal.

On the other hand, it is critical that this generalization be kept in perspective. The dimensions to which gender differences apply are, as in the present study, numerous, but they are hardly infinite. Rather, there were many dimensions - for, example, chronic fatigue and physical illness - on which female and male study subjects showed no differences whatever. Thus, such differences deserve our attention, but should not blind us to common experience which derives from **studenthood** rather than gender.

The second statement stands as a corollary to the first. With the male as model, behavioral evaluation was straightforward. Male attributes were positive while female attributes were negative deviations from male standards. Treating gender differences as coequal requires a new standard of evaluation. One possibility is to see such differences as reflective of distinct but different **strengths**, with members of each gender thus having much to share with others of the opposite gender.

Through the lens of these principles, the findings of the present study support the following implications.

24. Greater dissemination of information with respect to psychosocial differences based on gender as part of residence life programming.
25. Access to group discussion of 'changing relationships'.
26. Increasing diversity of programming options.
27. Greater attention to female security fears.

Information dissemination. The gender differences noted in the present study are hardly novel to interested professionals. On the contrary, they are well established in the literature and, furthermore, the subject of increasing research interest. They are novel, however, for freshman students, and it is they who would benefit from the dissemination of such information.

At present, this is problematic on several grounds. In most instances, information with respect to gender differences tends to be restricted to 'women's studies' courses taught in academic departments for

university credit. Consequently, for the bulk of entering freshman, such information is **not** readily available and, moreover, not presently in a form that would make it readily accessible or relevant.

An alternative is to incorporate these data into residence life programming, thus rendering it in a less formal manner, and accenting its practical character. The latter point deserves special emphasis. As we have seen, gender based differences routinely shape both individual behavior as well as interpersonal conduct. The consequences are typically benign, but this is not always the case. Insensitivity to such differences may, for example, inadvertently result in residence and/or academic programs and policies which may be particularly ill suited to the requirements of members of one gender or the other. Similarly, ignorance of such differences may be the basis of miscommunication and misunderstanding in cross-gender interaction, either between peers, romantic partners or students and faculty. Thus, gender differences are not merely of academic interest, but rather have significant practical consequences for freshman daily conduct. They may require that both genders be treated equally where inequity is now commonplace, or they may require respect for differences where such differences are now not routinely recognized or acknowledged.

Disseminating such information to **all** freshman, irrespective of gender, would thus be intended to ameliorate various unnecessary and correctable sources of cross-gender abrasion. In turn, this might not only reduce one of various sources of transitional stress, but also underline the desirability of freshmen acquiring a mix of attributes from either gender. Thus, males might benefit from heightened relational sensitivity and ownership of place while females might benefit from greater assertiveness and task orientation.

Discussion of 'changing relationships'. Within their individual capacities, most study subjects did not merely accept the state of their relationship with friends, romantic partners, and parents. Rather, they set out to change them, usually in the direction of enhanced cordiality, understanding and support, with varying degrees of success.

Such efforts highlight the fact that many freshman students are keenly aware of their relationship with those important to them, and some would like to know more, both about how such relationship work and how they might be changed for the better. This was perhaps most apparent in the talks given to summer orientation students in Summer '88 and '89 at the University of Guelph. In both instances, student comments

suggested a real interest in pursuing the topic at a later time and in much greater detail, perhaps on an on-going basis.

This suggests the basis for yet another residence based program, namely, a workshop style discussion group focused on the changes in the relationships of participants and oriented both towards description and intervention. Wilson (1990) reports on several related programs in the United States aim at exploring and shaping student moral values.

Mention of this program alternative has been placed within a larger exploration of 'gender' quite deliberately. In the case of both summer orientation presentations, noted above, for example, interest in such a discussion group derived exclusively from female participants and often concerned male others (eg., boy-friends, fathers, brothers).

In light of the findings of this and others studies (eg., Gilligan, 1982), this should hardly come as a surprise. Women's preoccupation with relationships is one of the attributes which systematically distinguishes them from men. As Chapman (1989) notes, offering a program such as this would act to legitimize and validate a central feature of women's experience. Properly conducted, such a program might also render significant practical aid as freshman students, male and female, grapple with the relational difficulties associated with the first semester at university.

Programming diversity. Present programming efforts oriented toward freshman students are inadvertently inimical to female sensibilities. Activities are designed for large groups whereas many women prefer small ones. Programs are oriented towards doing whereas many women prefer talking. The combined result among many female subjects was disorientation and heightened stress, the opposite of what was intended.

This is **not** to say that there is anything inherently wrong with large group, action oriented activities for those that prefer them. It is merely to advise that this will likely not be the case for at least a bare majority of women. One alternative is to use women's predilections and preferences as the basis of expanding available programs and activities, with the full range accessible to freshman students of either gender.

The thrust of such an effort would be to increase the **diversity** of programs and activities oriented toward freshman students. Its purpose would be to maximize the likelihood that **all** entering freshman could

find at least some contexts compatible with their concerns and interests, and thus expand their opportunities for 'getting connected'.

Security fears. In enjoining students to come to the University, both the residence system in particular and the university campus in general make an implied claim. This suggests that in **all important respects**, the university will become their home away from home. This necessarily includes issues of safety and security. For a minority of study subjects, however, all female, this was one claim on which the University apparently failed to deliver. In so doing, the University not only exacerbated student transitional stress, they may also have undermined the ability of specific female students to perform academically up to their potential.

It is not clear from subject reports what precisely the University ought to do to quell such fears, although greater information dissemination, reduced night-time classes, assured escorts from night-time classes back to residence, and enhanced campus lighting were all mentioned. The point seems to be that the University **be seen** to be trying to address such fears seriously and systematically, thus once again validating female concerns.

In reviewing this range of operational implications, a closing comment is in order as regards the cross-linked character of freshmen experience. Just as social and academic matters interpenetrate in the lives of students, so too efforts to intervene which ignore such cross-linkages are at risk of doing more harm than good. Thus, it is tempting, given the widespread downturn in subjects' grades, to pay particular attention to academic matters alone. This might involve remedial programs, more selective recruitment of academically superior students, tinkering with the content of courses or the nature of program majors, and so on.

All of these efforts would likely have **some** effects, but it is unlikely that these would be precisely those that we would desire. The reason for such uncertainty is precisely the complex, cross-linked character of student daily life. This suggests that there are virtually no variables whose effects can be predicted **independent** of a variety of other intervening and concurrently potent variables. Thus, a final operational implications is that:

28. **Efforts at intervention must match in complexity the phenomenon they seek to alter.**

In this instance, the ecology of student experience is of sufficient complexity that any intervention which targets a particular subsystem alone is likely to fail. Intervention in one subsystem is likely to trigger counteracting responses in another subsystem. The benign outcome is thus likely to involve little change. The negative outcome may involve unanticipated effects whose consequences may be more harmful than those the intervention was intended to correct.

Invariably, this leaves policy and program personnel on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, to do nothing may be unacceptable. On the other hand, any action, especially one taken with only partial knowledge, may be risky. The above implications represent a compromise based on the present study, namely, a coordinated intervention strategy coupled with careful monitoring of the results.

Research Implications

The final "practice" implication provides an excellent starting point in the consideration of the research implications of the present study. This is so because it touches directly on the question of the choice of research methodology.

As the introductory review demonstrates, the usual approach to freshman experience has relied on a **reductive** strategy. On the implied assumption that freshman experience is too complex to apprehend whole, researchers have tended to focus attention on only one part at a time. Thus, as studies multiply, it is further assumed that reconstruction of the whole will eventually obtain from a detailed understanding of many parts.

The problem with such an approach, as this study demonstrates, is that it is impossible to accurately describe - let alone "understand" - the nature of the part seen in isolation from the larger whole. Thus, as student academic performance was initially examined, one portrait came into focus. As it was considered again, seen through the lens of, say, subjects' love relationships, another portrait arose, and still another, quite different from either the first or the second, when data from all three domains had been examined. This implies, as a corollary to the preceding "practice" implications, that:

29. **Choice of research methods must correspond to the map of the phenomenon under study.**

Previous efforts to study freshman life have ultimately been based on a simple "map" of the phenomenon, namely, that of individual psychology, hence concern for the nature of the freshman. In light of data from the present study, such a map has fundamentally misguided research efforts insofar as individual attributes now appear as only a small part of a larger and more complex whole. In this sense, this study's theoretical bias in favor of an ecological perspective assumed a complex phenomenon and thus recommended a **triangular** approach to method selection. It now appears that this choice was critical. While diaries were enormously useful in some respects (eg., interpersonal relations), interviews proved superior in other areas (eg., academic achievement, classroom dynamics). In turn, the use of standardized measures (ie., quantitative data) proved indispensable in particular areas (eg., level of family dysfunction), especially insofar as it helped place some of the qualitative findings in perspective. Moreover, in light of the mapping now available, any future replications of this study would involve somewhat different choices (see below).

Thus, mapping is an unavoidable prerequisite of method selection, both as part of study design as well as part of post-study analysis.

In this instance, a key feature of post-study analysis must concern the effectiveness of personal diaries as a data collection vehicle. Predictably, that evaluation is mixed. In most respects, personal diaries lived up to expectations. They provided an relatively unstructured medium in which subjects were able to describe an extremely wide range of experiences in vivid and immediate terms. Moreover, using the interviews as a check for truthfulness and consistency, they provide a longitudinal record relatively free of systematic distortion or bias. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the diaries gave subjects an authentic voice free of the distorting lens provided by an adultocentric perspective. Thus, topic choice, topic order, affective emphasis, attention or inattention to detail, and so forth, were the subjects' choice, and **not** that of the researcher. Indeed, on several occasions "buddies" commented that the depressed subjects of their diaries appeared to them more "real" than the falsely cheerful and optimistic persona they encountered in personal interviews.

This said, the diaries were not without limitations. As a medium of self-expression, diaries favor those fluent on paper; those more able verbally were disadvantaged. This was especially apparent with respect to gender, with women typically voluble and expressive and men typically brief (even cryptic) and concrete. It is not clear to what extent such differences can be generalized. Certainly upperclassmen might be expected to be more expressive than their freshman counterparts. This suggests that future replications might need to vary the medium in which diaries are recorded, perhaps paper for some, audio tape recordings others. It might also argue in favor of some period of training in diary writing for all subjects as well as some revision of the diary manual to deal explicitly with such differences.

Diary writing, furthermore, is clearly a complex activity, coupling a lack of structure with labor intensive bursts of involvement. The former explains why the diary manual (see Appendix 3) proved extremely important in helping subjects stay on track. Such was the latter that high subject attrition could only be avoided through massive social support, including permission to experiment with various methods of diary writing. Such support, however, yielded an unanticipated result in the form of a quasi-therapeutic relationship between subjects and their "buddies". While an extremely positive experience for both participants, this relationship simultaneously represented a threat to external validity insofar as it reduced the comparability between study subjects and all other freshman. That is, study subjects were subtly changed in the process, with unknown consequences for their performance across a range of dimensions. In light of experience, it now appears that the relationship between "buddy" support, subject transformation, and subject retention were an unfortunately but necessary compromise in a study such as this. In the absence of such support, the level of subject attrition would likely have been so high as to be fatal to the project as a whole.

These findings imply that:

30. Diaries represent a potent method for developing authentic accounts of subjects' daily experience with a minimum of distortion.
31. The use of personal diaries should always be coupled with ancillary methods (eg., interviews) to ensure that all relevant topics are explicated to the same extent.
32. Personal diaries should only be used when appropriate support for such efforts are available.

33. **Personal diaries are most useful with subjects who meet criterion levels of verbal expression and fluency.**

Finally, this study raises the issue of sample selection, specifically representativeness. Such is usually not the case with qualitative studies where validity is assumed and reliability and consistency regarded as problematic (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Thus, the central purpose of such research is the effort to understand subjects' perception of social reality **as they see it**. Of course, it follows that, providing the subject has been truthful, their account cannot be anything but valid. Moreover, a central guiding assumption is that all members of a given sampling category, say, university students, share a common core of experience, however much specific details may vary. Accordingly, subject selection is made on theoretical rather than statistical (ie., random) grounds (McCracken, 1988), with the accent on depth of inquiry rather sample size.

While accepting the notion of theoretical selection, there still may be contexts in which this may prove problematic. The assumption of a shared experiential core will receive its strongest support when the analytic category involves a population relatively homogeneous with regard to critical dimensions. Efforts at theoretical generalization would then be reasonable despite the fact of a small sample. However, support for the assumption begins to erode as population heterogeneity increases.

In the present instance, for example, gender proved a central dimension. On a pilot basis, the size of the male subsample was acceptable; for a full replication it would not be. Similarly, any future effort with university populations would need to attend to at least **three** key dimensions: gender (male-female), residence (on-off campus), and year of study (1-2-3-4). All three dimensions would need to be incorporated into a sampling frame, though theoretical selection **within** each dimension would still apply. This implies that:

34. **Sample selection in qualitative research must correspond to the map of the phenomenon under study.**

Thus, as the heterogeneity of the analytic population increases, the complexity of the theoretical sampling frame would similarly be expected to increase.

Theoretical Implications

Over the past 20 years, higher education have been the object of intense research inquiry. The result is a massive research literature, but one, as Kuh et al. (1986) demonstrate, in which neither theory development nor theory testing has had a prominent place (see Weidman, 1987). This is most unfortunate since data never speaks for itself; it must always be interpreted through the lens of some set of theoretical propositions, whether these are stated explicitly or left implicit. In this sense, the atheoretical character of much recent research is illusory. It is not so much that theoretical concerns have been absent, but rather they have been left implicit, and thus subject neither to critical scrutiny nor to explicit test. The pernicious result is the opportunity for the widespread acceptance of 'bad' theory, that is, assumptions and proposition which cannot withstand careful scrutiny.

In contrast, the theoretical concerns of the present study have been clear and explicit. As noted in the introduction, one of the central tensions underpinning this work is the contrast between traditional **student development theory** and an **ecological model** of student development. Thus, it was argued that the former offers a restricted, rather linear portrait of student development whereas the latter provides a richer and more comprehensive perspective. In light of the study's findings, it remains to evaluate these competing claims, see what, if any, theoretical implications may be derived, and briefly illustrate some of the substantive areas in which study data may make a theoretical contribution.

With respect to the first issue, there are at least six ways in which the present study appears to favor an ecological approach to student experience. First, the range of topics unearthed as relevant exceed by a considerable margin those explored to date by traditional theory. Especially noteworthy here are events and people central to student conduct on campus but who reside off-campus, such as parents, romantic partners, and old friends. Second, the pervasive extent to which cross-linkages characterize student experience is relatively foreign to traditional theory which tends to focus on one domain or another. Third, gender differences emerged as central to understanding several aspects of student experience, yet, as Gilligan (1982) argues with respect to moral development, traditional theory has typically relied on male responses as

universal exemplars of student behavior. Fourth, subjects' responses displayed context-specific variation beyond what traditional theory would have predicted. For example, using the language of Perry's (1970) scheme, whereas many female subjects displayed a marked capacity for relativistic thinking as regards relational matters, dualistic thinking was still apparent with respect to many academic contexts. These findings call in question the extent to which such thinking styles inhere in freshman students and suggests instead that they may well emerge in response to the demand characteristics of the academic environment. Such a formulation would explain how cognitive variation **within the same subjects** could occur when moving between personal and academic contexts. Fifth, adequate description of student experience required inquiry across a much wider range of contexts - both on and off campus - than is typically undertaken by traditional theory. Finally, in accord with traditional theory, attention to psychological processes was important to a full appreciation of student experience. However, at variance was the extraordinary shaping capacity of social processes in students' lives. That is, student psychological processes do **not** appear as inherent or characterological attributes, but rather are largely constituted on an on-going basis out of social categories and/or on-going interaction with significant others.^{52 53}

Taken together, these various contrasts between traditional theory and an ecological perspective suggest twin conclusions. Despite widespread concern for the "whole student" among proponents of traditional development theory, in practice the object their inquiry appears to be a more narrowly defined and restricted entity which we may call 'the student'. In contrast, a picture of 'whole students' begins to emerge in the present study based on its adherence to an ecological perspective. That this portrait pertains to 'whole students' is suggested by both the complexity and the variability of the findings. That it is only a glimpse, however, is suggested by the sampling method employed and by the absence of various student

⁵² The short duration of the present study, only 12 weeks, made it impossible to assess the claims of traditional theory regarding development as linear or stage-like.

⁵³ These data are consistent with Lacy (1978) who compared the socialization experiences of undergraduate students in "traditional" and experimental university environments. The findings confirmed that interpersonal processes operated to mediate the structural effects of the university environment with regard to such values as liberalism, cognitive complexity, personal autonomy, thinking introversion and theoretical orientation.

subgroups deserving of research attention (eg., off-campus, foreign, visible minorities, homosexual, handicapped, etc.).

These considerations imply that:

39. To advance our understanding of student development will require approaches which simultaneously accent the complexity and variability of student populations as well as of the contexts of their experience.
40. At present, an ecological perspective offers the greatest likelihood of generating the data upon which such a multidimensional model of student development might be based.

The first implication is intended to draw attention to the extraordinary heterogeneity of student populations. It is neither reasonable nor useful to develop a theory about 'the student', for at best such an effort can only refer to a convenient fiction. Rather, what is needed are a family of theories which correspond to the various major subgroups into which student populations may be divided, and with no further effort at higher-level integration or grand theorizing. Further, such an effort would need to take account not merely of the students in question, but include all the contexts in which they interact. Since each of these contexts will typically be social in character, all the 'others' who populate these contexts will need to be included in the analysis.

These requirements do not appear compatible with the tenets of traditional theory models. Hence, the second statement suggests that an **ecological** or **systems** perspective offers an extremely potent theoretical alternative. The power of this alternative model is that it requires proponents to learn a new way of seeing the world: one that calls attention to the organized patterns which connect people in interaction, and which conceptualizes what is going on in the minds of the participants as primarily reflective of their on-going interactional experience (Benjamin, 1986). Hence, the traditional tendency to focus on single attributes (eg., ego state, cognitive level, academic achievement, etc.) can be seen for what it is, a useful but incomplete approach which invariably strips away those very contextual features which gave these attributes their particular meaning in the first place. An ecological perspective re-introduces context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), insisting that all events, processes, and persons can only be understood fully when seen in context. Indeed,

what is "whole" about 'whole students' is that they be seen in all of the contexts out of which they constitute their daily experience.

Finally, to the extent that this study touches on a wide range of substantive issues, a brief word is in order concerning the theoretical import of the study's findings. For illustrative purposes, four substantive issues have been selected for comment: student stress, parent-student relations, student academic performance, and peer relations.

As regards student stress, a recent review of the literature (Whitman et al., 1986) typifies the psychological perspective which underpins much traditional theory. Thus, stress is pictured as a personal response by students to key dimensions in the university environment, most notably academic demand. Accordingly, only one campus-based relationship receives any attention, that between students and faculty.

The present study suggests that this perspective is useful as far as it goes. It is incomplete, however, insofar as it does not go nearly far enough. While it is true that academic demand and student-faculty relations represent important sources of students stress, they are neither the only nor the most important stressors. Rather, full appreciation of the bases of student stress requires a broader perspective which encompasses persons and processes both on and off-campus. As important, such relations are not unidirectional (from the environment to the student) but bidirectional (from the student to the [social] environment).

On the one hand, this suggests a multidimensional model of student stress in which stress is conceptualized not as an outcome of some process (say, academic demand), but rather as itself a process, ebbing and flowing with the dynamics of the contexts in which students are involved. On the other hand, it suggests that efforts to ameliorate student stress that are confined to the campus (see Whitman et al., 1986) are not only unlikely to succeed, they may actually have undesirable consequences. By focusing student attention on events and persons on campus, they may dissuade students from attending to and acting upon the simultaneous impact of processes and relationships off-campus.

As regards parent-student relations, a recent review (Benjamin, 1988a) concluded that the on-going relationship between parents and their student offspring is potent in shaping the lives and influencing the

future course of students. Much of the data in support of this conclusion derived from literatures other than higher education. Indeed, with few exceptions (eg., Komarovsky, 1985; Tinto, 1987; Weidman, 1987), researchers in higher education attend to parents little, if at all. This is presumably on the assumption that events and persons on campus account for most of the impact of university life on students.

Data from the present study strongly suggest that this assumption is incorrect. While many parents may be distant from the campus in geographic terms, they are very much present in psychological terms. That is, parents typically live on campus in the minds and through the conduct of their student offspring. This said, parental influence may vary significantly, and may be positive or negative. Based on this study, the character of that influence is primarily mediated by **family type**. Students who originate from families characterized by functional patterns of relating derive tremendous support from on-going interaction with their parents. The same cannot be said for students who originate from families characterized by dysfunctional patterns of relating. In such cases, continued interaction with parents may serve to perpetuate dysfunction at home while undercutting student self-esteem and motivation on campus. In short, on-going parent-student interaction must constitute a variable central to any theoretical effort to understand and predict student conduct.

As for student academic performance, this has been the object of intense research scrutiny for some time. A recent review of this literature (Mathiasen, 1984) supports twin conclusions: the bulk of that research has focused on the correlation between indicators of student performance (eg., grades) and single attributes of student character (eg., values); and, our ability to reliably predict academic performance remains quite limited.

In light of the present study, such limited success is hardly surprising. This is so for two reasons. First, while student attributes are clearly related to performance, this is seldom an independent relationship, that is, the impact of these attributes is typically indirect, mediated by relations with a range of significant others. Second, performance is cross-linked with a range of variables which have hitherto seldom, if ever, been considered seriously in the literature in question. These include the character and temporal course of relations with parents, friends, roommates and romantic others, classroom dynamics, exposure to good or

bad professors, the level of transitional stress, and so on. In other words, performance does not appear to be related in any linear fashion to who students are but rather, in addition, with whom they relate, the character of those relationships, and how they progress through time. Inclusion of these and other such relational and/or process variables within an ecological perspective would yield a much different model of performance than is now in vogue, and one on the basis of which more reliable predictions might be advanced.

Finally, as for peer relations, there is virtually universal agreement in the literature that such relations play a central role in freshman socialization (Pace, 1979). In light of the present study, such a statement remains problematic in at least two respects. First, it necessarily treats all peers as coequal in shaping student conduct and mental states (eg., attitudes). Data from the present study indicates that this is simply not the case. Rather, peers vary significantly in the degree to which they are perceived as significant to any given student, with degree of influence directly proportional to degree of perceived significance. Second, as used in the literature, "peers" typically refer to same-sex others who interact with a given student on campus. Again, data from the present study suggests that such a designation is severely limiting. In the present study, residential students interacted with peers both on and off campus. On campus, these often included both men and women, with heterosexual relations having an emotional charge which rendered them especially influential, a source of influence generally ignored in the literature. Off campus, men and women peers were again involved, with boyfriends a category of peer that was highly influential yet is typically ignored in the literature. In both cases, while the character of the relationship was important, so too was its temporal course. In short, theoretical adequacy requires that different categories of "peer" be distinguished, and that the temporal course of each relationship be charted before any valid statements of salience or impact can be made with confidence. Systematic inquiry of this sort would speak too to an issue raised earlier (see above, **Roommate Matching**), namely, the impact of roommate relations on the interactional repertoires of each participant. Confirmation of the possibility that such interaction may either propagate or stabilize dysfunction or may act to significantly mitigate dysfunction would be a theoretically salient

findings, speaking, for example, to such issues as roommate relations, parent-student relations, student achievement, and student attrition.

CONCLUSION

Each year across North America, millions of young people enter university for the first time. Most will continue on to graduate, if not at their university of first choice, than at some university. Most will enjoy their freshman year, some will not. Almost all will survive the experience without retaining any indelible scars or lifelong trauma. The freshman experience rarely involves crisis, though it will typically take some getting used to and most students will need to undergo some change in the process.

It is this process of change or transition that has been the focus of concern in the present study. As expected, transitional change was a universal experience, although for some the process was rather more painful than for others. Less predictably, transition was rarely something subjects underwent alone. Rather, it is a social process shared with a variety of others all of whom are of necessity undergoing some form of transition at the same time. Immediate others, such as new friends, do so because they too are freshman students subject to all of the same demands. Distant others, such as parents and lovers, do so precisely because of their involvement with freshman students. Consequently, transition and the stress invariably associated with it can now be seen as far more complex than was hitherto thought.

This understanding brings with it two dividends and a dilemma. The dividends are that such data is enormously helpful in understanding the character of student development and also reveals a variety of contexts in which judicious intervention may enhance the transitional experience for many students. The dilemma is that the processes involved in freshman transition are of such complexity and involve so many actors that any intervention may yield a variety of unanticipated consequences, not all of them positive. It is at least comforting - and not a little humbling - to realize that students have survived these efforts for centuries and show every indication of continuing to do so.

APPENDIX 1

Student-Environment Study Group
University of Guelph

August 25, 1988

STUDENT EXPERIENCE STUDY

STUDENT CONSENT FORM

In volunteering to participate in the STUDENT EXPERIENCE PROJECT, I understand the following:

1. I will be asked to complete three standardized questionnaires concerned, respectively, with cognitive development, family dynamics, and student stress. The stress instrument will be repeated on two subsequent occasions.

2. I will be asked, along with all other freshmen, to complete the Incoming Student Student Information Form.

3. I will be asked to discuss my background and my experience at the University of Guelph with a same sex "buddy" at two week intervals for the first eight weeks of my stay at the University, and once again at the end of the first semester. Each of these discussions will take 30 and 90 minutes and will be recorded in some fashion by my "buddy". I will be "paid" for my participation in these discussions by means of food vouchers only.

4. I will be asked to complete a daily diary throughout the first eight weeks of my stay at the University, and will be provided with a primer instructing me on how this is to be done. I will also be provided with all the materials relevant to this task (eg. binder, paper, notebook). Further, my diary will only be identified by a "control number" and will be read by two people, the only two who will know my true identity: my "buddy" and the Research Co-ordinator of the Study Group, Dr. Michael Benjamin. Suitably altered (see #6, below), a photocopy of my diary will be retained by the Study Group.

5. The Group will have access to my academic record, both from high school and my first semester at the University.

6. Any and all information I provide, by whatever means, will be held in strictest confidence, and this confidentiality will be preserved as long as the material is retained. The copy of my diary retained by the Study Group will have all identifying information, concerning myself or anyone else I refer to, either deleted or falsified.

7. I may decline to answer any question put to me, whether in verbal or written form, and may withdraw from the Project at any time without penalty.

FULL NAME

DATE

UNIVERSITY ID NUMBER

APPENDIX 2

STUDENT EXPERIENCE PROJECT

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTAKE INTERVIEW

1. Tell me something about how your family works?

Probes: family structure (composition); relationship with father, mother, siblings; parents marital relationship and Ss part (if any) in it; how parents, siblings see Ss and their relationship with Ss; differences between how Ss is treated by parents compared to siblings (eg. rivalry, conflict); sources of family tension or stress; any events of special note during the past year; parents orientation towards Ss education and their involvement in decision to go to Guelph; parents view of Ss future academic and vocational goals; parent's view of alcohol and drug use; openness of parents to discuss intimate issues with SS, including sexuality; any change in relationship with parents, siblings over past year; reason(s) for change; expectations regarding change in these relationships as a result of coming to University

2. Can you give me some idea of who your same-sex friends are and the nature of your relationship to them?

Probes: size and density of peer network; degree of closeness with peers, especially identification of one or more "best" friends; salience of these friendships and of friendship in general; sorts of things talk about and do with friends; degree to which Ss rely on friends for social support, including recent examples of same; sources of conflict or tension in relation between Ss and peers; presence of peers from home at Guelph; involvement with drugs/alcohol and attitudes towards same; expectations regarding change in these relationships as a result of coming to University; how easy or difficult has it been for Ss to form new relationships; "friendship" relationship with opposite-sex peers re frequency & salience

3. What about your relationship to your boyfriend or girlfriend?

Probes: dating experience; rating of social competence; number of romantic others over last year (ie., relative stability of such relationships); degree of seriousness or intimacy; sexual experience (if any) or interest in same; presence of any future plans re this person (eg. marriage); expectations regarding change in this relationship as a result of coming to University

4. How do you expect to adjust to the social and academic demands of University life?

Probes: previous experience living away from home; typical coping style under conditions of stress; expected sources of stress at Guelph; expected relationship with faculty and staff; expected sources of support and guidance at the University; present sense of confidence and self-esteem (both academic and social); expectations with regard to residence living (especially in relation to roommate); academic plans (including likelihood of remaining at Guelph to graduation)

PERIODIC INTERVIEWS

- current progress, both academic and social
- sources of stress and methods of coping with same
- sources of support
- on-going relationship with parents and any changes in same
- feedback re diary

TERMINATION INTERVIEW

- review academic and social changes over past three months
- review stability and change in relationship with parents (and siblings), peers (both at home and at Guelph), romantic other (both at home and at Guelph), faculty and staff
- sources of stress and methods of coping with same, including any changes in coping style
- sources of support, including any changes in same
- review any major discrepancies between initial expectations and the experience of being at the University
- assess current academic goals relative to initial goals
- review experience of participating in Project, especially any benefits or problems associated with the daily diaries
- debrief Ss concerning review of questionnaire findings

APPENDIX 3

**** THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE PROJECT ****

THE STUDENT DIARY: A PRIMER

THE STUDENT-ENVIRONMENT STUDY GROUP

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

GUELPH, ONTARIO, CANADA

August, 1988

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

There is much about the day-to-day life of university students that university staff and faculty as well as in-coming freshmen either don't understand or only vaguely appreciate. Consequently, there are a host of outstanding questions that beg for answers. What's it like to be a newly arrived freshman? What's it like to live away from home for the first time? What are the positive and negative aspects of living in residence? Do guys experience university differently from girls? If so, what's the difference? Does going to university change the relationship between students and their parents, their siblings, their friends, their boyfriends or girlfriends? What is it that makes a particular prof a pleasure to listen to while another is dry and boring? Are small classes better than large ones? What's the difference between classes of varying size as places to learn or places to socialize? How does it feel being connected, a part of things, as opposed to being alone, not knowing anyone? How do you get connected? Is it easier to get connected if you live in residence as opposed to an off-campus apartment or at home with your parents? What's it like studying while being in love as opposed to when you've just broken up with someone you liked a lot? And how does going to university change how you think and feel about yourself?

To date, these and a variety of similar questions simply have no clear answers. To provide convincing and systematic answers is no easy matter. It will require many students who are willing to share a small slice of their life with us. That means writing down what they usually take for granted by trying to see their day-to-day life at Guelph through new eyes.

In this primer, we'll describe the use of the student diary which, we believe, provides a richer, more detailed and, most important, more genuine account of student experience than all other available methods. Such diaries involve volunteers such as yourself who keep a running record of their experience for the first **eight weeks** of your time at the University of Guelph.

One of the key questions students always ask when volunteering to do a diary is this: what sort of things should I pay attention to, and so take the trouble to write down, and what things can I safely ignore or screen out?

Before we answer this important question, we should note that our approach to getting a handle on students' day-to-day experience is still experimental. Your feedback - about what works and what doesn't, what is enjoyable and what isn't - will be critical to refining and improving this approach. Your thoughts and feelings as the experience of doing a diary unfolds are almost as important as the diary itself; so don't be afraid to express them, to ask questions and to be creative and innovative.

STUDENT DIARIES: WHAT TO INCLUDE

An obvious answer to the question of what to include might be: everything! It only takes a moments thought, however, to realize that this couldn't possibly work, if for no other reason than that you would be so busy recording what you had for breakfast that you would never find time to get through the rest of the day!

Instead, we have selected **FIVE** questions that should help structure your thinking yet give you ample opportunity to write about your day-to-day experience in all its variety. They are: **WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN and WHY**. While these questions will still require you to make value judgements about what's important and what's not, they should at least narrow the choices down to a manageable size. Let's go through each of these questions and see what they include, beginning with the three easiest: **WHEN, WHERE and WHO**.

WHEN. "When" refers simply to the blocks of time into which you break up the day between when you wake up in the morning and when you go to bed at night. The intervals in questions will vary in length in terms of the **main activities** in which you are involved. When you go to class, you may chat with friends, read a newspaper, doodle on your pad, etc., but you're mainly there to listen and take notes on a lecture. So the duration of the class sets the boundaries of that particular block of time. Another example concerns studying. You may talk on the phone, get up for a snack, look out the window, and so on, but the time spent studying represents a single block of time. So how you spend your time, and the number of block of time into which you break up your day may vary a lot from one day to the next. Indeed, how much it varies or how much it stays the same is an important question in its own right.

Incidentally, "when" doesn't only refer to school days, but to **EVERY** day of the eight weeks during which you keep a diary, including weekends! Just because you're attending university, doesn't mean that the non-academic things you do aren't important. Quite the contrary.

WHERE. "Where" refers to the places in which you spend time. Some students study in their residence room, others prefer to do so in the library, and still others may study in a variety of places. When noting where you spend your time, be specific. When referring to a particular class, for example, indicate the room number and the building. If this location is used again and again, you need describe it in detail only once. We'll know what you're talking about should you refer to it again in more general terms.

WHO. "Who" refers to the people with whom you spend time. In some cases, this will be straightforward since it will refer to people whom you know: friends, acquaintances, boyfriends or girlfriends, professors, and so on. If so, tell us their name and indicate who they are to you, that is, the nature of your relationship to them. Such detail is important so we know over time the people who make up your network of contacts. Be assured, however, that your confidentiality and that of the people being referred to will be safeguarded; specific names and any other details that could identify you or them will either be blacked out or replaced with false information in the diary copy we retain. More about this later.

While it will usually be easy to name the people with whom you spend time, this may not always be the case. As newcomers, your initial experience may involve a swirl of names and faces of people whom you are just getting to know. That's OK too. Use your judgement about whether and how to identify them for us. In a sense, as we read your diaries, we'll get to know them in the same gradual way that you do. And don't forget those people, especially university staff, with whom contact is intended to be only incidental, such as clerks, secretaries and service personnel; such contacts are important too.

WHAT. "What" is a little trickier than the other questions because it refers to two things at once. First, it refers to what you are **doing**: reading, studying, talking, partying, listening to a lecture, and so on. In this sense, "what" asks you to describe your activity in as much detail as necessary to allow us to get some sense of what it is that you are doing.

But "what" also has a second meaning that is just as important. This refers to what you're thinking or feelings while involved in the activity in question. Some of the time, for example, studying may be boring, such that you repeatedly find yourself thinking about something else. Other times, if the material really grabs you, you may find it exciting, such that your thinking will be more academic, say, about how a leaf converts sunlight into energy. More complicated examples may involve the mix of thoughts and feelings you have about a boyfriend or girlfriend as that relationship develops and matures or disintegrates and ends.

WHY. The final question, "why", is the hardest of all because it refers to the motives and intentions which underly your behavior. In some cases, "why" may attach to specific events and relationships, for example, saying something nasty about someone because you're envious of them. In other cases, "why" will be rather more general, referring, for example, to how you assess your goals and objectives in coming to

university in relation to your actual experience on arrival here. In many cases, your initial expectations will be quite different from your actual experience. How are the two different and in what direction, positive or negative? As you can see, "why" questions will probably not crop up every day, but only from time to time. Your diary is a good place to explore such thoughts, help sort them out so that you can move forward with a clearer sense of where you're going and why.

We must stress once again that these five questions are only intended as **general guidelines**. What you decide to enter (or exclude) from your diary will still involve a judgement call on your part. Two **rules of thumb** may be of some help. First, trust your intuition. If it seems significant to you, write it down; if not, ignore it. Second, remember that these diaries are intended to describe your experience for others not present. Consequently, much that you take for granted will not be at all obvious to us. This suggests not only that you take special care in describing your experience, but also that you repeatedly ask yourself, "Will this be interesting to others?" For example, chatting with an acquaintance over lunch may seem trivial to you but will help us understand something about patterns of social interaction and friendship formation.

AN ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE

Like many things in life, the only way to really learn about them is by actually doing them yourself. Diary writing is like that. But a concrete example may at least give you a sense of what diary writing is like. Below, we provide an excerpt from a diary recording one student's experience of a typical morning. The author was a female student, age 21, in her third year at Guelph.

8 AM XXX Class

A small room that seats about 60 people, now about half full, with people pretty spread out over the whole room; equal numbers of males and females. People seem clumped in small groups of friends. I know no one in the class, not even a passing acquaintance. Little cliques in class make it hard to make contact, so I usually sit by myself. I don't feel particularly close to anyone in the class, especially at this time of day. Don't feel especially comfortable here.

The class is particularly quiet today but that's probably because of the earliness of the hour.

Upon entering the class, I was about to sit down and there was a girl that was going to sit in the same aisle. When I sat down, she changed her mind and sat in the row behind me. I make a joke of it and ask her if she wanted my seat and that I would move. She makes a comment about 8 o'clock classes and that was it. I wonder to myself if it was me she was trying to avoid. Feeling a little self-conscious today, or maybe its just this class.

The professor is a little "hair brained" sometimes. While he obviously knows a great deal, he comes across as a very funny man. He's always making jokes to the class. He also seems to care about students, something that's not all that common. For example, he seems to be trying to learn who people are; when putting questions on the board, we write our names down. Wouldn't mind talking to him outside of class but I've been very busy; not sure how he would respond if I did approach him.

It's difficult to feel part of the class not knowing anyone. Perhaps I compensate by paying close attention during lectures. I make learning the main purpose for attending class. That's unusual for me; I usually enjoy the social side of class at least as much. I hate to say its a negative experience because I suppose I adapt to not knowing anyone. I try to appear approachable - by smiling or making eye contact - but classrooms do not seem conducive to meeting others, especially if they already have friends in the class. These groups tend to make my isolation more noticeable.

9 AM Ran errands. Went to see the Chairperson of ABC Department, Dr. _____. I am getting together people in my major to discuss plans for _____ because it's often difficult to get groups of

students together; they always seem too busy or disinterested. His office is in Z Hall. Met Dr. _____, his secretary and the woman I will see about funds. I was pleasantly surprised. They were really friendly people; asked me about myself, my studies, my future plans. A very positive experience. They seem genuinely interested in my project; extremely receptive and helpful. I tried to behave very positively; don't get to meet the Chairperson everyday and I was feeling a little nervous. I think he is very interested in students and would like to see a club formed. My predecessor for this job was a very enthusiastic student so perhaps this made it easier for me to make a good impression.

9:30 AM Sitting in U.C., Center 6, at a table for four, alone, by the Northwest exit. Can look out of window and see Horticulture. It was just a lovely day and gave me a really good feeling.

Almost everyone in this area is sitting by themselves, eating or reading. I don't feel alone, taking a break between classes with a coffee and a tea biscuit. Sitting in a seat nearest aisle. Perhaps others might get the impression I don't want visitors. Seems to be subtle pressure for people to be with others; a person alone in most situations seems to stand out. Not sure why.

Food Services lady came along to clean off part of the table beside me. Also took my empty plate away. I am annoyed by this, although I didn't say anything to her - not sure what to say - they don't ask before removing things. There was a garbage container right beside my table where I would have thrown my garbage when I was finished. Very impersonal interaction, no speech or eye contact whatever. As she left, I said "Thank-you" and she squeaked a reply of some sort; maybe there is some disability that I don't know about. Feels like my personal space was intruded upon. I don't make a fuss or move; I am grateful that the mess beside me was cleaned up.

Very little eye contact with people as they walk by unless it's someone I know. Even though this happens, it's nice to feel as if you're going unnoticed. Sometimes I feel awkward sitting alone if there are a lot of people around me laughing and talking out loud. That subtle sense of pressure to be a part of things. It's not really a negative experience because I know I have friends out there but just that I haven't made plans to meet anyone. Good excuse to sit by a window. Somewhere to look and it doesn't seem out of the ordinary.

10 AM YYY Class

Larger room, about 100 seats, very full today. Still a comfortable atmosphere. I know a few people in class with whom I sit. Knowing someone does make class more enjoyable. Professor A goes at an easy pace, not too slow, so that the class becomes stagnant. Today, asked for student's opinions about lecture material, pace of lectures, or any other concerns we had. I wish all profs were as concerned. It's nice to feel that students can have input and know that the prof will take us seriously, like this one does.

11 AM U.C. courtyard. Met a friend, male, briefly in passing. We exchanged a few words. Difficult to strike up a meaningful conversation inside of a couple of minutes; only small talk. Would have liked to ask him to go for a coffee - there are several places we could have gone on campus - but he was too busy running his own errands. A little disappointing. I like him; he's a nice guy.

11:20 AM Sitting in lounge - U.C. - by washrooms at southwest corner of building. Nice atmosphere to sit and relax. My impression is that people don't want to be bothered. This is a quiet place to sit or sleep or study; not really a place to socialize. A nice, small, enclosed and quiet part of the U.C. where one might not feel quite so lost, as if sitting in a courtyard. More relaxed in smaller areas that seem sectioned off. I come here if I have an hour off between classes. Guelph could use more little spaces like this.

I sat beside a girl on one of the couches. No exchange of words but I was comfortable.

12-2 PM ZZZ Class, zzz at 12 noon, and aaa at 1 PM

Both rather large classes, second class room is steep tiers. I am switching majors and do not recognize most people in either class. A lot of material to be covered. Difficult course so must concentrate on lecture material. Still, it is a friendly atmosphere.

General Comments re Diary

Once I got started writing what I thought the Diary exercise required, I enjoyed it. Tended to want to write down a lot of things that maybe weren't pertinent to the study. If I had an allotted amount of space, I'd keep it shorter.

Difficult part was getting started on the project (obviously). Would be better to try and start immediately after first (training) meeting. A group session is a good idea, to start the people off.

Read the description (ie., the primer) several times to get a true picture of what was expected. Perhaps at some midpoint, a meeting could be held to make sure people are on track.

Notice that this excerpt covers most of the five questions discussed above. Furthermore, her observations are clear, specific and quite detailed. They move easily from the 'outside', what is going on around her, to the 'inside', what she is thinking or feeling. She is also quite willing to make specific recommendations for change and is not afraid to answer "why" questions concerning what is going inside her or around her. The only limitation of this example is that it is confined to events specific to the campus. In fact, your diaries are intended to cover ALL the contexts in which students spend time during their first eight weeks here, including, for example, what happens in the interaction between you and your parents (including conversations on the telephone) as well as other events and people you encounter off-campus.

SOME ADDITIONAL THINGS TO REMEMBER

Given that all those who volunteer to complete diaries are busy students, the challenge of this approach is to write down your experiences in a systematic manner but without interfering in any way with your normal life on campus.

We suggest that this should involve three simple steps. The first step is to become thoroughly familiar with the five questions described above. If you are unsure of anything, please ask; either Michael or Brian from the Study Group will be only too happy to give you whatever help you need. Since each volunteer will be assigned a same-sex "buddy" with whom you will talk regularly throughout the eight week period, you can also ask them for help. Remember that everything said above is offered as a general guide; there are no hard and fast rules about what things to include or exclude. As we noted above, trust your intuition; if you think it's important, we probably will as well.

The next step involves writing down your experience on a routine, day-to-day basis. To ensure that your jottings are all in one place, we have provided you with diaries, 8" x 11" three ring binders with three-hole paper; you should have plenty of paper, but if you need more, just ask. You can record your experiences in any style you feel comfortable with as long as you remember that your jottings must be intelligible to us as well as yourself. For example, you may use full sentences and paragraphs or you may prefer to use notes or short phrases. To be systematic, we suggest you try to make recording your experience into a routine activity. There are various ways you might do this. One way others have found helpful is to use a small pad (provided by us) in which you write down a brief word or phrase for each event as it occurs. These cryptic notes will become the skeleton of events which can then be fleshed out in sentences when you come to your main recording period, usually at the end of each day. Initially, each main recording period may take an hour or more. With practice, however, we expect that much less time will be needed.

The third step involves regular review. This is intended to ensure that your recordings are intelligible, in some sort of logical order and have not omitted any important event or experience. For this purpose, we suggest that you set aside about an hour each week to review what you've written over the past seven days. You might also want to add any thoughts or feelings you have about the recording process itself. Is it becoming easier or more difficult? Has it revealed anything to you - about yourself, your friends, your

family, your life at the University - that you wouldn't have known otherwise? Has the method you use to record your daily life changed with practice? If so, how has it changed?

This weekly review will also be helpful because we will ask you to turn in your diaries to us every SEVEN days. A photocopy of this material will be made and your original returned to you. That way you'll keep the original for periodic review while we will be assured of a permanent copy should anything (eg. accidental loss or defacement) happen to your copy. Every two weeks, when you meet with your "buddy", we may also offer you feedback as required to help keep you on track and make diary writing as enjoyable as possible.

Note that the amount of diary material is likely to vary, not only because of practice in diary writing, but also because your life experience at Guelph will not be evenly distributed throughout the eight week recording period. Some periods will be pretty routine while others will be dense with activity. For example, we would like you to pay particular attention to the period surrounding your **FIRST DAY** at Guelph. How did you feel the day or two before coming to Guelph? How did you get along with family and friends during this period? What expectations, thoughts, even fantasies did you have at this time? What was the first day at Guelph like? How were you treated by registration and other staff members? What were the first couple of days like in residence? What was it like meeting your professors for the first time? And so on.

Other "high" points during the first semester might include making your first friend, getting past your first exam, going to your first party, meeting your roommate, seeing your parents again for the first time, and so on. This isn't to suggest that the routine stuff in between isn't important. It is and will require your careful attention. However, the "high" points may signal important turning points in the process of adjusting to Guelph and so may receive more extended treatment in your diaries.

Finally, a few words about confidentiality. To be really helpful, your diary records must be relatively complete. This will include a range of routine daily activities. But it may also include activities (either yours and/or those of others) you might otherwise consider private. We would like diary records that include ALL relevant activities, including private ones. However, you must be the final judge of what to record or not record. If you feel comfortable sharing the full range of your experience, be assured that your experience will be treated with the respect and dignity it deserves. If you prefer not to share certain things, we respect your right to do so. However, it's important that you know that whatever you include in your diary - whether it refers to your behavior or that of a friend or acquaintance - will be held in strictest confidence.

As regards confidentiality, there are several good reasons why your diaries cannot be anonymous. First, we may want to consult you about something you have written. Perhaps what seemed absolutely clear to you is vague to us. We may also want to ask you to expand on certain key portions or we may conclude from what you've written that you are in some distress and need some help. Unless we know who you are, none of these things would be possible.

We will, however, be taking several steps to protect your confidentiality. First, the diaries are only identified by a "control number", a randomly selected number which corresponds to your student ID. Without a master list, no one will know your true identity. Second, the diaries are handled by ONLY three people. Every week, a staff member of the Group will record that a diary has been received from a person having your control number. They will also photocopy it and then return the original to you. However, that person will NOT read your diary. Only two people will do that: your "buddy" (who only reads the diaries of the students assigned to him or her) and the Group's research coordinator, **Dr. Michael Benjamin** (who reads all the diaries). Further, the information you provide will only be used in combination with that of others in order to identify and describe trends or patterns in the experience of in-coming freshmen. Even if extracts of your diary are used for illustrative purposes in a final report, for

example, all identifying information will either be deleted or falsified - examine the diary extract provided above to see what the final product looks like - so there is no way you would ever be identified (even if your mother happened to read a copy!).

By the use of these methods, we can assure you that anything you choose to include in your diary will be held in confidence. That's not true anonymity, but it's close!

If after reading this primer, you still have some questions or if you later encounter some problem, please don't hesitate to ask for help; Michael (Benjamin) or Brian (Pettigrew) from the Study Group or your "buddy" will be only too willing to answer your questions. The offices of the Study Group are located on the third floor of the University Centre (just follow the signs) and our telephone extensions are 2377, 2378, 6385, 3195 or 2388.

SUMMARY

The STUDENT EXPERIENCE PROJECT asks 40 to 60 in-coming freshmen to share with us the first eight weeks of your experience at the University of Guelph. In addition to completing some standard forms and talking on a regular basis with a same-sex "buddy", the main way you will do this is by completing a daily diary. While we would like you to be frank and open in your diary entries, and we ensure your confidentiality towards that end, you must judge what to include or exclude from your diaries.

To assist you in this process, remember that your daily diary entries should be organized around FIVE questions:

1. **WHEN:** the time intervals which capture the **main activities** in which you are involved, including weekends.
2. **WHERE:** the locations where you spend your time, including activities off-campus.
3. **WHO:** the people with whom you interact, including family, friends and acquaintances, boyfriends or girlfriends, and others, such as university faculty and staff. This includes face-to-face interaction as well as interaction on the telephone or by letter.
4. **WHAT:** the nature of the activities in which you are involved AND what you think and/or feel about these activities, including your thoughts and feelings about the people with whom you interact.
5. **WHY:** the motives and intentions, goals and objectives, expectations and experiences, which underly your behavior.

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